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The Atonement of Leam Gundas.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FRIEND OF THE FUTURE.



INSTEAD of going home when she left Steel's Corner, Leam turned up into the wood; making for the old hiding-place where she and Alick had so often sat in the first days of her desolation, and when he had been her sole comforter. She was very sorrowful, and oppressed with doubts and self-reproaches. As she climbed the steep wood path, her eyes fixed on the ground, her empty basket in her hand, and her heart as void of hope or joy as was this of flowers, she thought over the last hour as she might have thought over a death. How sorry she was that Alick had said those words!—how grieved that he loved her like this when she did not love him—when she could never have loved him, if even she had not been a Spaniard and her mother's daughter!

But she did not wish that he was different from what he was, so that she might have been able to return his love. Leam had none of that shifting uncertainty, that want of central determination which makes so many women transact their lives by an *If*. She knew what she did not feel, and she did not care to regret the impossible, to tamper with the indefinite. She knew that she neither loved Alick nor wished to love him. Whether she had unwittingly deceived him in the first place, and in the second ought to sacrifice herself for him, unloving, was each a question on which she pondered full of those doubts and self-reproaches that so grievously beset her.

As she was wandering drearily onward, Mr. Gryce saw her from a side path. He struck off to meet her, smiling; for he had taken a strong affection for this strange and beautiful young creature, which he justified to himself as interest in her history.

This acute, suspicious, and inquisitive old heathen had some queer notions packed away in his wallet of biological speculations; notions which supplemented the fruits of his natural gifts, and which he always managed to harmonise with what he already knew by more commonplace means. He had been long in the East, whence he had brought a cargo of half-scientific, half-superstitious fancies—belief in astrology, mesmerism, spiritualism, and cheiromancy the most prominent. He could cast a horoscope; summon departed spirits; heal the sick and read the reticent by mesmeric force; and explain the past as well as prophesy the future by the lines in the hand.

So at least he said; and people were bound to believe that he believed in himself when he said so. He had once looked at Leam's hand, and had seen something there which, translated by his rules, had helped him on the road that he had already opened for himself, by private inquiry based on the likelihood of things. Crime, love, sorrow—it was no ordinary history that was printed in the lines of her feverish little palm, as it was no ordinary character that looked out from her intense pathetic face. There was something almost as interesting here as a meditation on the mystic *Nirvâna*, or a discourse on that persistent residuum of all myths—*Maya*, delusion.

It was to follow up the line thus opened to him that he had attached himself with so much zeal to his landlord; unsympathetic as such a man as Sebastian Dundas must needs be to a metaphysical and superstitious student of humanity, a born detective, shrewd, inquisitive, and suspicious. But he attached himself for the sake of Leam and her future, saying often to himself, "By-and-by. She will come to me by-and-by, when I can be useful to her."

Meanwhile Leam received his cares with the characteristic indifference of youth for the attentions of age. She was not at the back of the motives which prompted him, and thought him tiresome, with his mild way of getting to know so many things that were no concern of his. The shrewd guesses which he was making, and the terrible mosaic that he

was piecing together out of such stray fragments as he could pick up—and he was always picking them up—were hidden from her; and she understood nothing of the mingled surmise and certainty which made his interest in her partly retrospective and partly prophetic, as he fitted in bit by bit that hidden thing in the past, or foresaw the discovery that must come in the future. She only thought him tiresome and inquisitive, and wished that he would not come so often to see papa.

It did not take a large amount of that faculty of thought-reading which Mr. Gryce claimed as so peculiarly his own, to see that something unusual had happened to disturb poor Leam to-day. As she came on, so wrapped in the sorrow of her thoughts that the world around her was as a world that is dead—taking no heed of the flowers, the birds, the sweet spring scents, the glory of the deep-blue sky, while the flickering shadows of the budding branches played over her like the shadow of the net in which she had entangled herself—she looked the very embodiment of despair. Her face, never joyous, was now infinitely tragic. Her dark eyes were bright with the tears that lay behind them; her proud mouth had drooped at the corners; she was walking as one who neither knows where she is nor sees what is before her; as one for whom there is no sun by day and no stars for the night; lost to all sense but the one faculty of suffering. She did not even see that some one stood straight in the path before her; till, "Whither and whence?" asked Mr. Gryce, barring her way.

Then she started and looked up. Evidently she had not heard him.

He repeated the question with a difference.

"Ah! good-morning to you, Miss Dundas. Where are you going? where have you been?" he said in his soft low-pitched lisping voice, with the provincial accent struggling through its patent affectation.

"I am going to the yew-tree and I have been to Steel's Corner," she answered slowly, in her odd almost mathematically exact manner of reply.

"From Steel's Corner! And how is that excellent young man, our deputy shepherd?" he asked.

"Better," she said with even more than her usual curtness; and she was never prelix.

"He has been fearfully ill, poor fellow!" said Mr. Gryce, in the manner of an ejaculation.

She looked at the flowers with which the wood was golden and azure.

"Yes," was her not too eloquent assent.

"And you have been sorry?"

"Every one has been sorry," said Leam evasively.

"Yes, you have been sorry," he repeated; "I have read it in your face."

He had done nothing of the kind; he had guessed it from the fact of her daily visits, and he had surmised a special interest from that other group of facts which had first set him thinking;—namely, that Steel's Corner owned a laboratory, two, for the matter of that; that old Dr.

Corfield was a clever toxicologist; that Leam had stayed there during her father's honeymoon; and that her stepmother had died on the night of her arrival. "And your average Englishman calls himself a creature with brains and inductive powers!" was his unspoken commentary on the finding of the coroner's jury and the verdict of the coroner. "Bull is a fool," the old heathen used to think, hugging his own superior sagacity as a gift beyond those which nature had allowed to Bull in the abstract.

"I have known him since I was a child. Of course, I have been sorry," said Leam coldly.

She disliked being questioned as much as being touched. The two indeed were correlative.

"Early friendships are very dear," said Mr. Gryce, watching her. He was opening the vein of another idea which he had long wanted to work. She was silent.

"Don't you think so?" he asked.

"They may be," was her reluctant answer.

"No, they are! Believe me, they are! The happiest fate that man or woman can have is to marry the early friend—transform the playmate of childhood into the lover of maturity, the companion of age."

Leam made no reply. She was afraid of this soft-voiced, large-eyed, benevolent old man who seemed able to read the hidden things of life at will. It disturbed her that he should speak at this moment of the happiness lying in the fulfilment of youthful friendship by the way of mature love; and proud and self-restrained as her bearing was, Mr. Gryce saw through the calmer surface into the disturbance beneath.

"Don't you think so?" he asked for the second time.

"How should I know?" Leam answered, raising her eyes but not looking into her companion's face—looking an inch or two above his head. "I have seen too little to say which is best."

"True, my child, I had forgotten that," he said kindly. "Will you take my word for it then, in lieu of your own experience?"

"That depends," said Leam. "What is good for one is not good for all."

"But safety is always good," returned Mr. Gryce, meaning to fall back on the safety of love and happiness if he had made a bad shot by his aim at safety from the detection of crime.

A scared look passed over Leam's face. It was a look that meant a cry. She pressed her hands together and involuntarily drew back a step, cowering. She felt as if some strong hand had struck her a heavy blow, and that it had made her reel.

"You are cruel to say that. Why should I marry——?" she began in a defiant tone, and then she stopped. Was she not betraying herself for the very fear of discovery?

"Alick Corfield, for instance?" put in Mr. Gryce at a venture. "He may serve for an illustration as well as any one else," he added with

a soothing kind of indifference, troubled by the intense terror that came for one moment into her face. How soon he had startled her from her poor little hiding-place! How easy the assumption of extraordinary powers based on the clever use of ordinary faculties! Your true magician is after all only your quiet and accurate observer! "You are not vexed that I speak of him when I want a name?" he asked, after a pause to give Leam time to regain her self-possession—to readjust the screen, to fasten once more the mask.

"Why should I be vexed?" she said in a low voice.

"He is not disagreeable to you?"

"No, he is my friend," she answered.

"And a good fellow," said Mr. Gryce, lisping over a maple twig. "Don't you think so?"

"He is good," responded Leam, like a dry and lifeless echo.

"An admirable son."

"Yes."

"A devoted friend; a friend to be trusted to the death; a man without his price, incorruptible, with whom a secret, say, would be as safe as if buried in the grave. He would not give it even to the wind, and no reed on his land would whisper, 'Midas has ass's ears.'"

"He is good," she repeated with a shiver. Yet the sun was shining and the spring-tide air was sweet and warm.

"And he would make the most faithful and indulgent husband."

There was no answer.

"Do you not agree with me?"

"How should I know?" she answered; and she said no more, though she still shivered.

"Be sure of it. Take my word for it," he said again, earnestly.

"It is nothing to me. And I hate your word indulgent!" cried Leam with a flash of her mother's fierceness.

Mr. Gryce, still watching her, smiled softly to himself. His love of knowledge, as he euphemistically termed his curiosity, was roused to the utmost, and he was like a hunter who has struck an obscure trail. He wished to follow this thing to the end, and to know in what relations she and her old friend stood together;—if Alick knew what he, Mr. Gryce knew now, and had offered to marry her notwithstanding; and whether, if he had offered, Leam had refused or accepted. Observation and induction were hurrying him very near the point. Her changing colour, her averted eyes, her effort to maintain the pride and coldness which were as a rule maintained without effort, the spasm of terror that had crossed her face when he had spoken of Alick's fidelity, all confirmed him in his belief that he was on the right track, and that the lines in her hand coincided with the facts of her tragic life. Tragic indeed!—one of those lives fated from the beginning—doomed to sorrow and to crime like the Orestes, the *Œdipus* of old.

But if he was curious, he was compassionate—if he tortured her

now it was that he might care for her hereafter. That hereafter would come: he knew that! and then he would make himself her salvation.

He thought all this as he still watched her, Leam standing there like a creature fascinated, longing to break the spell and escape, and unable.

"Tell me," then said Mr. Gryce in a soft and crooning kind of voice, coming nearer to her; "what do you think of gratitude?"

"Gratitude is good," said Leam slowly, in the manner of one whose answer is a completed thesis.

"But how far?"

"I do not know what you mean," she answered with a weary sigh.

Again he smiled; it was a soft, sleepy, soothing kind of smile that was almost like an opiate.

"You are not good at metaphysics?" he said, coming still nearer and passing his short thick hands over her head, caressingly.

"I am not good at anything," she answered dreamily.

"Yes, at many things—to answer me for one; but bad at dialectics."

"I do not understand your hard words," said Leam, her sense of injury at being addressed in an unknown tongue rousing her from the torpor creeping over her.

How much she wished that he would release her! She had no power to leave him of her own free-will. A certain compelling something in Mr. Gryce always forced her to do just as he wished, to answer his questions, stay when he stopped, follow when he beckoned. She resented in feeling but she obeyed in fact; and he valued her obedience more than he regretted her resentment.

"How far would you go to prove your gratitude?" he continued.

"I do not know," said Leam—the weary sigh repeated.

"Would you marry for gratitude where you did not love?"

"No," she answered in a low voice.

"Would you marry for fear, then, if not for gratitude nor love? If you were in the power of a man, would you marry that man to save yourself from all chance of betrayal? I have known women who would. Are you one of them?"

Again he passed his hands over her head and across and down her face. His voice sounded sweet and soft as honey—it was like a cradle-song to a tired child. Leam's eyes drooped heavily. A mist seemed stealing up before her through which everything was transformed; by which the sunshine became as a golden web wherein she was entangled, and the shadows as lines of the net that held her; where the songs of the birds melted into distant harmonies echoing the sleepy sweetness of that soft compelling voice; and where the earth was no longer solid but a billowy cloud whereon she floated rather than stood. A strange sense of isolation possessed her. It was as if she was alone in the universe, with some all-powerful spirit who was questioning her of the secret things of life, and whose questions she must answer. Mr. Gryce was not the tenant of Lionnet as the world knew him, but a mild yet awful god in whose

presence she stood revealed, and who was reading her soul like her past through and through. She was before him there as a criminal before a judge; discovered, powerless; and all attempt at concealment was at an end.

"Tell me what you know," said the soft and honeyed voice, ever sweeter, ever more soothing, more deadening to her senses.

Leam's whole form drooped, yielded, submitted. In another moment she would have made full confession; when suddenly the harsh cry of a frightened bird near at hand broke up the sleepy harmonies and scattered the compelling charm. Leam started, flung back her head, opened her eyes wide and fixed them full on her inquisitor. Then she stiffened herself as for a personal resistance; passed her hands over her face as if she was brushing it from cobwebs; and said in a natural voice, offended, haughty, cold:

"I did not hear what you said. I was nearly asleep."

"Wake then," said Mr. Gryce, making a movement as if he too was brushing away cobwebs from her face. After a pause he took both her hands in his. "Child!" he said, speaking naturally, without a lisp and with a broader provincial accent than usual, speaking too with ill-concealed emotion; "some day you will need a friend. When that day dawns, come to me. Promise me this. I know your life and what lies in the past. Do not start—no, nor cover your face, my child! I am safe; and so are you. You must feel this, that I may be of use to you when you want me; for you will want me some day, and I shall be the only one who can save you."

"What do you know?" asked Leam, making one supreme effort over herself, and confronting him.

"Everything," said Mr. Gryce solemnly.

"Then I am lost," she answered in a low voice.

"You are saved," he said with tenderness. "Do not be afraid of me; rather thank God that he has given you into my care. You have two friends now instead of one, and the latest the most powerful. Good-by, my poor misguided and bewildered child! A greater than you or I once said, 'Her sins, which are many, are forgiven her, because she loved much.' Cannot you take that to yourself?—if not now, nor yet when remorse is your chief thought, you will later; till then, trust and hope!"

He turned to leave her, tears in his eyes.

"Stay!" cried Leam; but he only shook his head and waved his hand.

"Not now," he said, smiling as he broke through the wood, leaving her with the impression that a chasm had suddenly opened at her feet, into which sooner or later she must fall.

She stood a few moments where the old philosopher and born detective had left her, then went up the path to the hiding-place where she had so often before found the healing to be had from nature and solitude

—to the old dark spreading yew, which somehow seemed to be more her friend than any human being could be or was—more than even Alick in his devotedness or Mr. Gryce in his protection. And there, sitting on the lowest branch, and sitting so still that the birds came close to her and were not afraid, she dreamed herself back to the desolate days of her innocent youth—those days which were before she had committed a crime, or gained friend or lover.

She had been miserable enough then—one alone in the world and one against the world. But how gladly she would have exchanged her present state for the worst of her days then! How she wished that she had died with mamma, or living, had not taken it as her duty to avenge those wrongs which the saints allowed! Oh, what a tangled dream it all was!—she so hideously guilty in fact, and yet—that thought of hers, if unreal and insane, that had not been a sin!

But she must wake to the reality of the present, not sit here dreaming over the past and its mystery of loving crime. She must go on as if life was a mere holiday-time of peace with her, where no avenging furies followed her lurking in the shadows, no sorrows threatened her looking out with scared scarred faces from the distance. She must carry her burden to the end; remembering that it was one of her own making, and for self-respect must be borne with that courage of despair which lets no one see what is suffered. Of what good to dream, to lament? She must live with dignity while she chose to live. When her grief had grown too great for her strength—then she could take counsel with herself whether the fire of life was worth the trouble of keeping alight, or might not rather be put out without more ado.

CHAPTER X.

MAYA: DELUSION.

LEAM was not dedicated to peace to-day. As she turned out of the road she came upon the rectory pony-carriage—Adelaide driving Josephine and little Fina—just as it had halted in the highway for Josephine to speak to her brother.

Adelaide was looking very pretty. Her delicate pink cheeks were rather more flushed and her blue eyes darker and fuller of expression than usual. Change of air had done her good; and Edgar's evident admiration was even a better stimulant. She and her mother had ended their absence from North Aston by a visit to the Lord-Lieutenant of the county; and she was not sorry to be able to speak familiarly of certain great personages met there as her co-guests: the Prime Minister for one and an Archbishop for another. And as Edgar was, as she knew, influenced by the philosophy of fitness more than most men, she thought the Prime Minister and the Archbishop good cards to play at this moment.

Edgar was listening to her, pleased, smiling; thinking how pretty she looked, and taking her social well-being and roll-call of grand friendships as gems that enriched him too, flowers in his path as well as roses in her hand, and a sunny sky overarching both alike. She really was a very charming girl—just the wife for an English country gentleman—just the mistress for a place like the Hill—the heart of the man owning the Hill not counting.

But when Leam turned from the wood path into the road, Edgar felt like a man who has allowed himself to be made enthusiastic over an inferior bit of art, knowing better. Her beautiful face, with its glorious eyes so full of latent passion, dreaming thought, capacity for sorrow—all that most excites yet most softens the heart of a man; her exquisite figure, so fine in its lines, so graceful yet not weak, so tender yet not sensual; as she stood there in the sunlight the gleam of dusky gold showing on the edges of her dark hair; her very attitude and action as she held a basket full of wild-flowers which, with unconscious hypocrisy, she had picked to give herself the colour of an excuse for her long hiding in the yew-tree—all dwarfed, eclipsed Adelaide into a mere milk-and-roses beauty of a type to be seen by hundreds in a day; while Leam—who was like this peerless Leam? Neither Spain nor England could show such a one as she! Ah! where was the philosophy of fitness now, when this exquisite creation, more splendid than fit, came to the front?

Edgar went forward to meet her, that look of love surprised out of concealment which tells so much on his face. Adelaide saw it, and Josephine saw it; and the eyes of the latter grew moist, but the lips of the other only closed more tightly. She accepted the challenge, and she meant to conquer in the fight.

Wearied by her emotions, saddened both by the love that had been confessed and the friendship that had been offered, this meeting with Edgar Harrowby seemed to Leam like home and rest to one very tired and long lost. The bright spring day, which until now had been as grey as winter, suddenly broke upon her with a sense of warmth and beauty, and her sad face reflected in its tender evanescent smile the delight of which she had become thus suddenly conscious. She laid her hand in his, frankly; he had never seen her so frankly glad to meet him; and a look, a gesture, from Leam—grave, proud, reticent Leam—meant as much as cries of joy and caresses from others.

"Good-morning, Miss Dundas; where have you been?" said Edgar, his accent of familiar affection which meant "Beloved Leam," in no wise overlaid by the formality of the spoken "Miss Dundas."

"Into the wood," said Leam, her hand, as if for proof thereof, stirring the flowers.

"It is a new phase to see you given to rural delights and wild-flowers, Leam," said Adelaide with a little laugh.

"But how pleasant that our dear Leam should have found such a nice amusement!" said Josephine.

"As picking primroses and bluebells, Joseph?" And Adelaide laughed again.

Somehow her laugh, which was not unmusical, was never pleasant. It did not seem to come from the heart, and was the farthest in the world removed from mirth.

Leam looked at her coldly.

"I like flowers," she said, carrying her head high.

"So do I," said Edgar with the intention of taking her part. "What are these things?" holding up a few cuckoo-flowers that were half hidden like delicate shadows among the primroses.

"You certainly show your liking by your knowledge! I thought every schoolboy knew the cuckoo-flower!" cried Adelaide, trying to seem natural and not bitter in her banter; and not succeeding.

"I can learn. Never too late to mend, you know. And Miss Dundas shall teach me," said Edgar.

"I do not know enough. I cannot teach you," Leam answered, taking him literally.

"My dear Leam, how frightfully literal you are!" said Adelaide. "Do you think it looks pretty? Do you really believe that Major Harrowby was in earnest about your giving him botanical lessons?"

"I believe people I respect," returned Leam gravely.

"Thanks," said Edgar warmly, his face flushing.

Adelaide's face flushed too.

"Are you going through life taking as gospel all the unmeaning badinage which gentlemen permit themselves to talk to ladies?" she asked from the heights of her superior wisdom. "Remember, Leam, at your age girls cannot be too discreet."

"I do not understand you," said Leam, fixing her eyes on the fair face that strove so hard to conceal the self within from the world without, and to make impersonal and aphoristic what was in reality passionate disturbance.

"A girl who has been four years at a London boarding-school, not to understand such a self-evident little speech as that?" cried Adelaide, with well-acted surprise. "How can you be so insincere! I must say I have no faith, myself, in Bayswater *ingénues*—have you, Edgar?" with the most graceful little movement of her head—her favourite action, and one that generally made its mark.

"I do not understand you," said Leam again. "I only know that you are rude. You always are."

She spoke in her most imperturbable manner and with her quietest face. Nothing roused in her so much the old Leam of pride and disdain as these encounters with Adelaide Birkett. The two were like the hereditary foes of old-time romance, consecrated to hate from their birth upward.

"Come! come! fair lady, you are rather hard on our young friend!" said Edgar with a strange expression in his eyes, angry, intense, and yet

uncertain. He wanted to protect Leam, yet he did not want to offend Adelaide; and though he was angry with this last he did not wish her to see that he was.

"Dear Leam! I am sure she is very sweet and nice," breathed Josephine; but little Fina, playing with Josephine's chatelaine, said, in her childish treble, "No! no! she is not nice; she is cross, and never laughs, and she has big eyes. They frighten me at night, and then I scream. You are far nicer, Missy Joseph!"

Adelaide laughed outright; Josephine was embarrassed between the weak good nature that could not resist even a child's caressing words and her constitutional pain at giving pain; Edgar tried to smile at the little one's pertness as a thing below the value of serious notice, while feeling all that a man does feel when the woman whom he loves is in trouble—and he cannot defend her; but Leam herself said to the child, gravely and without bitterness:

"I am not cross, Fina; and laughing is not everything."

"Right, Miss Dundas!" said Edgar warmly. "If the little puss was older she would understand you better. You unconscionable little sinner; what do you mean? hey?" good-humouredly taking Fina by the shoulders.

"Oh, pray don't try and make the child a hypocrite!" said Adelaide. "You, of all people in the world, Edgar, objecting to her naïve truth—you, who so hate and despise deception!"

While she had spoken Fina had crawled over Josephine's lap to the side where Edgar was standing. She put up her fresh little face to be kissed.

"I don't like Leam and I do like you," she said, stroking his beard.

And Edgar, being a man, was therefore open to female flattery—whether it was the frank flattery of an infant Venus hugging a waxen Cupid or the more subtle overtures of a withered Ninon taking God for her latest lover—with interludes.

"But you should like Leam too," he said fondling her. "I want you to love me, but you should love her as well."

"Oh! anyone can get the love of children who is kind to them," said Adelaide. "You know you are a very kind man, Edgar," in a quiet matter-of-fact way. "All animals and children love you. It is a gift you have; but it is only because you are kind."

The context stood without any need of an interpreter to make it evident.

"But I am sure that Leam is kind to Fina," blundered Josephine.

"And the child dislikes her so much?" was Adelaide's reply, made in the form of an interrogation and with arched eyebrows.

"Fina is like the discontented little squirrel who was never happy," said Josephine, patting the plump little hand that still meandered through the depths of Edgar's beard,

"I am happy with you, Missy Joseph," pouted Fina; "and you"—to Edgar, whom she again lifted up her face to kiss—kisses and sweeties being her twin circumstances of Paradise.

"And with sister Leam; say, 'with Leam,' else I will not kiss you," said Edgar, holding her off.

She struggled, half laughing, half minded to cry.

"I want to kiss you!" she cried.

"Say 'with Leam,' and then I will," said Edgar.

The child's face flushed a deeper crimson; her struggles became more earnest, more vicious; and her laugh lost itself in the puckered preface of tears.

"Don't make her cry because she will not tell a falsehood," remonstrated Adelaide quietly.

"She does not like me. Saying that she does would not be true, and would not make her," added Leam just as quietly, and with a kind of hopeless acceptance of undeserved obloquy.

On which Edgar, not wishing to prolong a scene that began to be undignified, released the child, who scrambled back to Josephine's lap, and hid her flushed and disordered little face on the comfortable bosom made by Nature for the special service of discomposed childhood.

"She is right to like you best," said Leam, associating Edgar as the brother with Josephine's generous substitution of maternity.

"I don't think so. You are the one she should love—who deserves her love," he answered emphatically.

"Come, Joseph!" cried Adelaide. "If these two are going to bandy compliments you and I are not wanted."

"Don't go, Adelaide; I have worlds yet to say to you," said Edgar.

"Thanks—another time. I do not like to see things of which I disapprove," was her answer, touching her ponies gently and moving away slowly.

When she had drawn off out of earshot, she beckoned Edgar with her whip. It was impolitic, but she was too deeply moved to make accurate calculations.

"Dear Edgar, do not be offended with me," she said in her noblest, most sisterly manner. "Of course, I do not wish to interfere; and it is no business of mine; but is it right to fool that unhappy girl as you are doing? I put it to you, as one woman anxious for the happiness—and reputation—of another; as an old friend who values you too much to see you make the mistake you are making now without a word of warning. It can be no business of mine, outside the purest regard and consideration for you as well as for her. I do not like her, but I do not want to see her in a false position and with a damaged character through you."

Had they been alone, Edgar would probably have accepted this remonstrance amicably enough. He might even have gone a long way in proving it needless. But in the presence of Josephine his pride took

the alarm ; and the weapon intended for Leam cut Adelaide's fingers instead.

He listened patiently till she ended ; then he drew himself up.

"Thanks," he drawled affectedly. "You are very kind both to Miss Dundas and myself. All the world knows that the most vigilant overseer a pretty girl can have is a pretty woman. When the reputation of Miss Dundas is endangered by me, it will then be time for her father to interfere. Meanwhile, thanks. I like her quite well enough to take care of her."

"Now, Adelaide, you have vexed him !" said Josephine in dismay, as Edgar strode back to where Leam stood waiting for him.

"I have done my duty," said Adelaide, drawing her lips into a thin line, and lowering her eyebrows ; and her friend knew her moods and respected them.

On this point of warning Edgar against an entanglement with Leam, she did really think that she had done her duty. She knew that she wished to marry him herself, in fact meant to marry him, and that she would probably have been his wife before now had it not been for this girl and her untimely witcheries ; but though, naturally enough, she was not disposed to love Leam any the more because she had come between her and her intended husband, she thought that she would have borne the disappointment with becoming magnanimity if she had been of the right kind for Edgar's wife. With Adelaide, as with so many among us, conventional harmony was a religion in itself, and he who despised its ritual was a blasphemer. And surely that harmony was not to be found in the marriage of an English gentleman of good degree with the daughter of a dreadful low-class Spanish woman—a girl who, at fifteen years of age, had prayed to the saints, used her knife as a whanger, and maintained that the sun went round the earth because mamma said so, and mamma knew ! No, if Edgar married any one but herself, let him at least marry some one as well fitted for him as herself, not one like Leam Dundas !

For the sake of the neighbourhood at large, the mistress of the Hill ought to be a certain kind of person ; they all knew of what kind ; and a queer, unconformable creature like Leam set up there as the Mrs. Harrowby of the period would throw all things into confusion. Whatever happened, that must be prevented if possible—for Edgar's own sake and for the sake of the society of the place.

All of which thoughts strengthened Adelaide in her conviction that she had done what she ought to have done in warning Edgar against Leam ; and that she was bound to be faithful in her course so long as he was persistent in his.

Meanwhile Edgar returned to Leam, who had remained standing in the middle of the road, waiting for him. Nothing belonged less to Leam than forwardness or flattery to men ; and it was just one of those odd coincidences which sometimes happen, that as Edgar had not wished her

good-by, she felt herself bound to wait his return. But it had the look of either a nearer intimacy than existed between them, or of Leam's laying herself out to win the master of the Hill as she would not have laid herself out to win the King of Spain. In either case it added fuel to the fire, and confirmed Adelaide more and more in the course she had taken.

"Look there!" she said to Josephine, pointing with her whip across the field; the winding way having brought them in a straight line with the pair left on the road.

"Very bold, I must say," said Josephine; "but Leam is such a child!—she does not understand things as we do!" she added by way of apology and defence.

"Think not?" was Adelaide's reply: and then she whipped her ponies and said no more.

"Why does Miss Birkett hate me?" asked Leam, when Edgar came back.

"Because—— Shall I tell you?" he answered, with a look which she could not read.

"Yes. Tell me."

"Because you are more beautiful than she is, and she is jealous of you. She is very good in her own way, but she does not like rivals near her throne; and you are her rival without knowing it."

Leam had looked straight at Edgar when he began to speak; but now she dropped her eyes. For the first time in her life she did not disclaim his praise, nor feel it a thing that she ought to resent. On the contrary, it made her heart beat with a sudden throb that almost frightened her with its violence, and that seemed to break down her old self in its proud reticence and cold control, leaving her soft, subdued, timid, humble—childlike and yet not a child. Her face was pale; her eyelids seemed weighted over her eyes, so that she could not raise them; her breath came with so much difficulty that she was forced to unclothe her lips for air; she trembled as if with a sudden chill, and yet her veins seemed running with fire; and she felt as if the earth moved under her feet. What malady was this that had overtaken her so suddenly? What did it all mean? It was something like that strange sensation which she had had a few hours back in the wood, when Mr. Gryce had seemed to her like some compelling spirit questioning her of her life, while she was his victim forced to reveal all. And yet it was the same with a difference. That had been torture covered down by an anodyne; this was in its essence ecstasy, if on the outside pain.

"Look at me, Leam," half whispered Edgar, bending over her.

She raised her eyes with shame and difficulty; very slowly, for their lids were so strangely heavy; very shyly, for there was something in them, she herself did not know what, which she did not wish him to see. Nevertheless, she raised them because he bade her. How sweet and strange it was to obey him against her own desire! Did he know that

she looked at him because he told her to do so? and that she would have rather kept her eyes to the ground? Yes, she raised them—and met his.

Veiled, humid, yearning, those eyes of hers told all—all that she herself did not know, all that Edgar had now hoped, now feared, as passion or prudence had swayed him, as love or fitness had seemed the best circumstance of life.

"Leam!" he said in an altered voice—she scarcely recognised it as his. He took her hand in his; when suddenly there came two voices on the air, and Mr. Gryce and Sebastian Dundas, disputing hotly on the limits of the Unknowable, turned the corner and came upon them.

Then the moment and its meaning passed; the enchanted vision faded; and all that remained of that brief foretaste of Paradise before the serpent had entered or the forbidden fruit been tasted, was the bald prosaic fact of Major Harrowby bidding Miss Dundas good-day, too much pressed for time to stop and talk on the Unknowable.

"Disappointed—balked—ill-used," were Edgar's first angry thoughts as he strode along the road; his second—those that were deepest and truest to his real self—came with a heavy sigh.

"Saved just in time from making a fool of myself!" he said below his breath, his eyes turned in the direction of the Hill. "It must be a warning for the future. I must be more on my guard, unless indeed I make up my mind to tempt fortune and take the plunge, for happiness such as few men have or for the ruin of everything!"

Meanwhile, pending this determination, Edgar kept himself out of Leam's way, and days passed before they met again. And when they did next meet it was in the churchyard, in the presence of the assembled congregation, with Alick Corfield as the centre of congratulation on his first resumption of duty, and Leam and Edgar separated by the crowd and stiffened by conventionality into coldness.

Maya—delusion! That strange trouble, sweet and thrilling, which disturbed Leam's whole being; Edgar's unfathomable eyes which seemed almost to burn as she looked at them; his altered voice scarcely recognisable, it was so changed;—all a mere phantasy born of a dream, all, what is so much in this life of ours, a mockery, a mistake, a vague hope without roots, a shadowy heaven that has no place in fact, the cold residuum of enthralling and bewitching myths—all Maya, delusion!

CHAPTER XI.

BY THE BROAD.

AFTER that scene in the pony carriage Leam began to take it to heart that little Fina did not love her. Hitherto, solicitous only to do her duty unrelated to sentiment, she had not cared to win the child's rootless and unmeaning affection; now she longed to hear her say to Major Har-

rowby, "I love Leam." She did not care about her saying it to any one else; but she thought it would be pleasant to see Edgar smile on her as he had smiled at Josephine when Fina had crawled on to her lap that day of Maya, and said: "You are far nicer, Missy Joseph."

She would like to have Edgar's good opinion. Indeed that was only proper gratitude to a friend; not unwomanly submission to the great young man of the place. He was invariably kind to her, and he had done much to make her cheerless life less dreary. He had lent her books to read, and had shown her pretty places in the district which she would never have seen but for him; he talked to her as if he liked talking to her, and he had defended her when Adelaide was rude. It was right then that she should wish to please him and show him that she deserved his respect.

Hence she put out her strength to win Fina's love that she might hear her say, when next Major Harrowby asked her, "Yes, I love Leam."

But who ever gained by conscious endeavour the love that was not given by the free sympathies of nature? Hearts have been broken and lives ruined before now for the want of a spell strong enough to turn the natural course of feeling; and Leam's success with Fina was no exception to common experience. The more she sought to please her the less she succeeded; and save that the child grew disobedient in proportion to the new indulgences granted, no change was effected.

How should there be a change? Leam could not romp, was not fond of kissing, knew no childish games, could not enter into childish nonsense, was utterly incapable of making-believe, never seemed to be thinking of what she was about, and had big serious eyes that oppressed the little one with a sense of awe not conducive to love, and of which she dreamed with terrifying adjuncts when she had had too much cake too late at night. What there was of sterling in Leam had no charm for, because no point of contact with, Fina. Thus all her efforts went astray, and the child loved her no better for being coaxed by methods that did not amuse her. At the end of it all she still said with her pretty pout that Leam was cross; she would not talk to her about mamma.

One day Leam took Fina for a walk to the Broad. It was the most unselfish thing she could do, for her solitary rambles, her unaccompanied rides, were her greatest pleasures; save indeed when the solitude of these last was interrupted by Major Harrowby. This, however, had not been nearly so often since the return of the Families as before; for Adelaide's pony-carriage was well-nigh ubiquitous, and Edgar did not care that the rector's sarcastic daughter should see him escorting Leam in lonely places three or four times a week. Thus the girl had fallen back into her old habits of solitude; and to take the child with her was a sacrifice of which she herself only knew the extent.

But if blindly and with uncertain feet, stumbling often and straying wide, Leam did desire to find the narrow way and walk in it, to

know the better thing and do it. At the present moment she knew nothing better than to give nurse a holiday and burden herself with an uncongenial little girl as her charge and companion, when she would rather have been alone. So this was how it came about that on this special day the two set out for the Broad, where Fina had a fancy to go.

The walk was pleasant enough. Leam was not called on to rack her brains, those non-inventive brains of hers which could not imagine things that never happened, for stories wherewith to while away the time, as Fina ran on alone, happy in picking the spring flowers growing thick on the banks and hedgerows. Thus the one was amused and the other was left to herself undisturbed; which was an arrangement that kept Leam's good intentions intact, but prevented the penance which they included from becoming too burdensome. Indeed, her penance was so light that she thought it not so great a hardship after all to make little Fina her companion in her rambles, if she would but run on alone and content herself with picking flowers that neither scratched nor stung, and where therefore neither the surgery of needles nor the dressing of dock-leaves was required, nor yet the supplementary soothing of kisses and caresses for her tearful sobbing angry pain.

The Broad, always one of the prettiest points in the landscape, was to-day in one of its most interesting phases. The sloping banks were golden with globe flowers and marsh "mary-buds;" and round the margin was a broad belt of silver where the starry white ranunculus grew. All sorts of the beautiful aquatic plants of spring were flowering, some near the edges apparently just within reach, tempting and perilous, and some farther off and manifestly hopeless; the leaves of the water-lilies which later would be set like bosses of silver and gold on the shimmering blue, had risen to the surface in broad, green, shining platters; and the low-lying branches of the trees at the edge dipped in the water and swayed with the running stream.

It was the loveliest bit of death and danger to be found for miles round; so lovely that it might well have tempted the sorrowful to take their rest for ever in a grave so sweet, so eloquent of eternal peace! Even Leam, with all the unspoken yearnings, the formless hopes of youth stirring in her heart, thought how pleasant it would be to go to sleep among the flowers and wake up only when she had found mamma in heaven; while Fina, dazzled by the rank luxuriance before her, ran forward to the water's edge with a shrill cry of delight.

Leam called to her to stand back, to come away from the water and the bank, which, shelving abruptly, was a dangerous place for a child. The footing was insecure, and the soil treacherous—by no means a proper playground for the rash uncertain feet of six! Twice or thrice Leam called, but Fina would not hear, and began gathering the flowers with the bold haste of a child disobeying orders and resolved to make the most of her opportunity before the time came of her inevitable capture.

Thus Leam, walking fast, came up to her and took her by the arm in high displeasure.

"Fina, did you not hear me? You must not stand here!" she said.

"Don't, Leam! you hurt me—you are cross—leave me alone," screamed Fina, twisting her little body to free herself from her step-sister's hand.

"Be quiet! you will fall into the river and be drowned if you go on like this," said Leam tightening her hold; and those small nervous hands of hers had an iron grasp when she chose to put out her strength.

"Leave me alone! you hurt me! oh! you hurt me so much!" screamed Fina, still struggling.

"Come with me then! Do as you are bid and come away," returned Leam, slightly relaxing her grasp. Though she was angry with the child, she did not want to hurt her.

"I shan't! Leave me alone! you are a cross ugly thing and I hate you!" was Fina's sobbing reply.

With a sudden wrench she tore herself from the girl's hands; slipped, staggered, shrieked; and the next moment was in the water, floating downward with the current and struggling vainly to get out; while Leam, scarcely understanding what she saw, stood paralysed and motionless on the bank.

Fortunately at this instant Josephine drove up. She was alone, driving her grey ponies in the basket phaeton, and saw the child struggling in the stream; with Leam standing silent, helpless, struck to stone as it seemed, watching her without making an effort to save her.

"Leam! Fina! save her! save her!" cried Josephine, who herself had enough to do to hold her ponies, in their turn startled by her sudden cries. "Leam! save her!" she repeated; and then breaking down into helpless dismay she began to sob and scream with short sharp hysterical shrieks, as her contribution to the misery of the moment. Poor Josephine! it was all that she could do, frightened as she was of her own prancing ponies, distracted at the sight of Fina's danger, horrified at Leam's apparent apathy. As things turned out it was the best that she could have done; for her voice roused Leam's faculties into active life again, and broke the spell of torpor into which horror had thrown them.

"Holy St. Jago, help me!" she said, instinctively turning back to first traditions and making the sign of the cross which she did not often make now, and only when surprised out of conscious into automatic action.

Running down and along the bank, with one hand she seized the branch of an oak that swept into the water, then plunged in up to her shoulders to catch the child drifting down among the white ranunculus. Fortunately Fina was still near enough to the shore to be caught as she drifted by without absolute danger of drowning to Leam; who waded back to land, drawing the child with her, not much the worse for her dangerous moment save for the fright which she had suffered and the

cold of her dripping clothes; in both of which conditions Leam was her companion.

So soon as she was safe on shore, the child began to scream and cry piteously, as was perhaps but natural; and when she saw Josephine she tore herself away from Leam and ran up to her as if for protection.

"Take me home to nurse!" she sobbed, climbing into the little low phaeton and clinging to Josephine, who was also weeping and trembling hysterically. "Leam pushed me in; take me away from her!"

"You say what is not true, Fina," said Leam gravely, trembling as much as Josephine, though her eyes were dry and she did not sob. "You fell in because you would not let me hold you."

"You pushed me in, and I hate you!" reiterated Fina, cowering close to the bosom of her warm soft friend.

"Do you believe this?" asked Leam, turning to Josephine and speaking with all her old pride of voice and bearing.

Nevertheless, she was as white as those flowers on the water. It was Madame's child who accused her of attempting to kill her; and it was the child whom she had so earnestly desired to win who now said, "I hate her," to the sister of the man to whom she longed to hear her say, "I love Leam!"

"Believe that you pushed her in?—that you wanted to drown dear little Fina?—no!" cried Josephine in broken sentences through her tears. "She mistakes! You must not say such dreadful things, my darling"—to Fina. "Dear sister Leam would not hurt a hair of your head, I am sure!"

"She did! she pushed me in on purpose," persisted the shivering child, beginning to cry afresh.

On which, a little common sense dawning on Josephine's distracted mind, she did her best to stop her own hysterical sympathy, remembering that to go home, change their wet clothes, have something warm to drink, and be put to bed, would be more to the purpose for both at this moment than to stand there crying, shivering, and recriminating, with herself as the weak and loving judge, inclining to both equally, to settle the vexed question of accident or malice.

"Good gracious, why are we waiting here!" she cried, drying her eyes quickly and ceasing to sob. "You will both get your deaths from cold if you stand here in your wet clothes! Come in, dear Leam, and I will drive you home at once. Fina, my darling, leave off crying, that's my little angel! I will take you to papa, and you will be all right directly. I cannot bear to see you cry so much, dear Fina! don't, my pet!"

Which only made the little one weep and sob the more, children, like women, liking nothing better than to be commiserated because of distress which they could control without difficulty if they would.

Seating the child at the bottom of the carriage, and covering her with the rug, Josephine flicked her ponies, which were glad enough to be off

and doing something to which they were accustomed, and soon brought her dripping charge to Ford House; where they found Mr. Dundas in the porch, drawing on his gloves—his horse standing at the door.

"Good heavens, what is all this about!" he cried, rushing forward to receive the disconsolate cargo unloading one by one; the whole group dank and dismal; Josephine's scared face swollen with tears, white and red in the wrong places; Leam's set like a mask, blanched, rigid, tragic; Fina's now flushed and angry, now pale and frightened, with a child's swift-varying emotions; and the garments of the last two clinging like cerements, and dripping small pools on the gravel.

"Leam pushed me into the river!" said Fina, beginning to cry afresh, and holding on by Josephine, who now kissed and coaxed her, and said, "Fina, my darling, don't say such a wicked thing of poor Leam; it is so naughty, so very naughty!" and then took to hugging her again, as the mood of the instant swayed her towards the child or the girl; but always full of womanly weakness and kindness to each, and only troubled that she had to make distinctions as it were between them.

"What is it you say, Fina?" asked Mr. Dundas slowly. "Leam pushed you into the river?"

"Yes," sobbed Fina.

"I did not, papa. And I went in myself to save her," said Leam, holding her head very straight and high.

Mr. Dundas looked at her keenly, sternly.

"Well! no, Leam," he answered, with as it seemed to her marked coldness and in a strange voice; "with all your unpleasant temper I do not like to suppose you could be guilty of the crime of murder."

The girl shuddered visibly. Her proud little head drooped, her fixed and fearless eyes sank shamed to the ground.

"I have always taken care of Fina," she said in a humbled voice, as if it was a plea for pardon that she was putting forward.

"You pushed me in, and you did it on purpose," repeated Fina; and Mr. Dundas was shocked at himself to find that he speculated for a moment on the amount of truth there might be in the child's statement.

Cold, trembling, distressed, Leam turned away. Would that sin of hers always thus meet her face to face? Should she never be free from its shadow? Go where she would, it followed her, ineffaceable, irreparable; the shame of it never suffered to die out; its remorse never quenched; the sword always above her head, to fall she knew not when, but to fall some day—yes, that she did know!

"But you must go upstairs now," said Josephine with a creditable effort after practicality; "we shall have you both seriously ill unless you get your clothes changed at once."

Mr. Dundas looked at her kindly.

"How wise and good you are!" he said with almost enthusiasm; and Josephine, her eyes humid with glad tears, her cheeks flushed with

palpitating joy, sank in soul to him again, as so often before, and offered the petition of her humble love which wanted only his royal signature to make an eternal bond.

"I love little Fina," she said tremulously. It was as if she had said, "I love you."

Then she turned into the house and indulged her maternal instinct by watching nurse as she undressed the child, put her in a warm bath, gave her some hot elderberry wine-and-water, laid her in her little bed, and with many kisses bade her go to sleep and forget all about everything till tea-time. And the keen relish with which she followed all these nursery details marked her fitness for the post of pro-mother so distinctly, that it made nurse look at her more than once, and think ; also made her say as a feeler, "Law, Miss, what a pity you've not had one of your own !"

Her tenderness of voice and action with the child when soothing her at the door, had also made Sebastian think ; and the child's fondness for this soft-faced, weak and kindly woman was setting a mark on the man's mind, well into middle age as she was. He began to ask himself whether the blighted tree could ever put forth leaves again ? whether there was balm in Gilead yet for him, and nepenthe for the past in the happiness of the future ? He thought there might be, and that he had sat long enough now by the open grave of his dead love. It was time to close it, and leave what it held to the keeping of a dormant memory only ; a memory that would never die, but that was serene, passive, and at rest.

So he pondered as he rode, and told Josephine's virtues as golden beads between his fingers to which his acceptance would give their due value, wanting until now—their due value merited if not won. And for himself, would she make him happy ? On the whole he thought that she would. She worshipped him, perhaps as he had worshipped that other ; and it was pleasant to Sebastian Dundas to be worshipped. He might do worse, if also he might do better ; but at least in taking Josephine he knew what he was about, and Fina would not be made unhappy. He forgot Leam. Yes, he would take Josephine for his wife by-and-by, when the fitting moment came ; and in doing so he would begin life anew and be once more made free of joy.

He was one of those men resilient if shallow, and resilient perhaps because shallow, who, persecuted by an evil fortune, are practically unconquerable—men who, after they have been prostrated by a blow severe enough to shatter the strongest heart, come back to their old mental place after a time, smiling, in no wise crushed or mutilated, and as ready to hope and love and believe and plan as before ; men who are never ennobled by sorrow, never made more serious in their thoughts, more earnest in their aims, though, as Sebastian had been, they may be fretful enough while the sore is open ; men who seem to be the unresisting sport of the unseen powers, buffeted, tortured as we see helpless things on earth—dogs beaten and horses lashed—for the mere pleasure of the stronger in inflicting pain, and for no ultimate good to be attained by

the chastening. The souls of such men are like those weighted tumblers of pith : knocked down twenty times, on the twenty-first they stand upright, and nothing short of absolute destruction robs them of their elasticity. As now when Sebastian planned the base-lines of his new home with Josephine, and built thereon a pretty little temple of friendship armed like love.

His heart was broken, he said to himself ; but Josephine held the fragments and he would make himself tolerably content with the rivet. Still it was broken all the same ; which simply meant that of the two he loved Madame the better, and would have chosen her before the other could she have come back ; but that failing her this other would do ; even Josephine's love being better than no love at all. Besides, she had her own charms, if of a sober kind. She was a sweet-tempered soft-hearted creature, with the aroma of remembrance round her when she was young and pretty and unattainable ; consequently, being unattainable, held as the moral pot of gold under the rainbow which, could it have been caught, would have made all life glad. The sentimental rest which she and her people had afforded during the turbulent times of that volcanic Pepita had also its sweet savour of association that did not make her less delightful in the present ; and when he looked at her now, faded as she was, he used to try and conjure back her image such as it had been, when she was a pretty, blushing, affectionate young girl who loved him as flowers love the sun, innocently, unconsciously, and without the power of repulsion.

Also she had the aroma of remembrance about her from another side—remembrance when she had been Madame's chosen friend and favourite, and the unconscious chaperon, poor dear, who had made his daily visits to Lionnet possible and respectable. He pitied her a little now when he thought of how he had used her as Virginie's hood and his own mask then ; and he pitied her so much that he took it on his conscience, as a duty which he owed her and the right, to make her happy at last. Yes, it was manifestly his duty ; unquestionably the right thing to do. The petition must be signed ; the suppliant raised ; Ahasuerus must exalt his Esther, his loving faithful humble Esther ; and when inclination models itself as duty the decision is not far off.

CHAPTER XII.

PALMAM QUI NON MERUIT.

ALL North Aston rang with the story of little Fina's peril, Josephine's admirable devotion, and Leam's shameful neglect, so shameful as to be almost criminal. It was the apportionment of judgment usual with the world. The one who had incurred no kind of risk, and had done only what was pleasant to her, received unbounded praise, while the one who was of practical use got for her personal peril and discomfort universal

blame. They said she had allowed the child to run into danger by her own carelessness, and then had done nothing to save her; and they wondered beneath their breath if she had really wished the little one to be drowned. She was an odd girl, you know, they whispered from each to each—moody, uncomfortable, and unlike any one else—and though she had certainly behaved admirably to little Fina, so far as they could see, yet it was not quite out of the nature of things that she should wish to get rid of the child, who, after all, was the child of no one knows whom, and very likely spoilt and tiresome enough.

But no one said this aloud. They only whispered it to each other; their comments making no more noise than the gliding of snakes through the evening grass.

As for Fina, she suffered mainly from a fit of indigestion consequent on the shower of sweetmeats which fell on her from all hands, as the best consolation for her wilful little ducking known to sane men and women presumably acquainted with the elements of physiology. She was made restless too, from excitement by reason of the multiplicity of toys which every one thought it incumbent on him and her to bestow; for it was quite a matter for public rejoicing that she had not been drowned, and Josephine Harrowby, as her reputed saviour, leapt at a bound on to the highest pinnacle of popular favour.

It made not the slightest difference in the estimation of these clumsy thinkers that the thing for which Josephine was praised was a pure fiction, just as the thing for which Leam was condemned was a pure fiction. Society at North Aston had the need of hero-worship on it at this moment, and a mythic heroine did quite as well for the occasion as a real one.

No one was so lavish of her praise as Adelaide. It was really delightful to note the generosity with which she eulogised her friend Joseph, and the pleasure that she had in dwelling on her heroism; Josephine deprecating her praises in that weak, conscious, blushing way which seems to accept while disclaiming.

She invariably said, "No, Adelaide, I do not deserve the credit of it—it was Leam who saved the child;" but she said it in that voice and manner which every one takes to mean more modesty than truth, and which therefore no one believes as it is given; the upshot being that it simply brings additional grist to the mill whence popularity is ground out.

Her disclaimers were put down to her good-natured desire to screen Leam—she had always been good to that extraordinary young person, they said. But then Josephine Harrowby was good to every one, and if she had a fault it was the generalised character of her benevolence, which made her praise of no value, you see, because she praised every one alike, and took all that glittered for gold. Hence her assurances that Leam had really and truly put herself into (the appearance of) actual danger to save Fina from drowning, while she herself had done nothing

more heroic than take the dripping pair of them home when all was over—she forgot to add, sit in the carriage and scream—went for nothing, and the popular delusion for all. She was still the heroine of the day, and *palmarum qui non meruit* the motto which the unconscious satirists bestowed on her.

She did not mean it to be so—quite the contrary; but wrong comes about from good intentions to the full as often as from evil ones. Her design was simply to be ruthless as so much conscientious self-respect in the first instance, and to do justice to Leam in the second; but between her good-natured advocacy and Adelaide's undisguised hostility, maybe the former did Leam the most harm.

The child's past danger was quite sufficient reason why Josephine should come more frequently than usual to Ford House. It was only natural that she should wish to know how the little one went on. The cold, sore throat, rheumatic fever, measles, that never came, might yet be always on the way; and the woman's fond fears were only to be quieted by the comforting assurance of daily observation. Leam did get a cold, and a severe one; but then Leam was grown up and could take care of herself. Fina was the natural charge of universal womanhood; and no one who was a woman at all could fail to be interested in such a pretty caressing little creature. And then Sebastian Dundas loved best the child which was not his own; and that too had its weight with Josephine, who somehow seemed to have forgotten by now that little Fina was Madame's child—false and faithless Madame—and was not part and parcel of the man she loved—as also in some strange sense her own. Madame's initial dedication had touched her deeply both at the time and ever after; the likeness of name was again another tie; and that subtle resemblance to herself, which every one saw and spoke of, seemed to round off all into a harmonious whole, and give her a right which even Mrs. Birkett did not possess.

It was about a week after the accident when Josephine went one morning, as usual, to ask after Fina, and be convinced by personal inspection that the pretty little featherhead, the child of many loves, was well. She was met in the drawing-room by Mr. Dundas, who when he greeted her took both her hands in his in a more effusive manner than he had ever permitted himself to show since Pepita's death; save once—before he had decided on Madame and when Josephine had one day touched an old chord tenderly.

Holding her thus, he led her to the sofa with a certain look of purpose in his face, of loving proprietorship in his bearing, that made poor fond Josephine's foolish heart knock loudly against her ribs.

Was it then coming at last!—that reward of constancy for which she had borne so much suspense, so many delays, such long dull days and tearful nights? Was the rickety idol of her whole life's worship really about to bless her with his smiles?

She cast down her eyes, trembling, blushing. She was thirty-five

years of age, but she was only a great girl still, and her love had the freshness which belongs to the cherished sentiment of girlhood ripened into the confessed, patient, unchanging love of maturity.

"You have been always good to me, Josephine," began Mr. Dundas, still holding her hand.

Josephine did not answer, save through the crimson of her tell-tale cheeks and the smile akin to tears about her quivering mouth.

"I think you have always liked me," he went on to say, looking down into her face.

Josephine closed her hand over his more warmly and glanced up swiftly, bashfully. Was there much doubt of it?—had there ever been any doubt of it?

"And I have always liked you," he added; and then he paused.

She looked up again; this time a certain tender reproach and surprise lying behind her evident delight and love.

"Had not my darling Virginie come between us, you would have been my wife long ago," said Mr. Dundas; the certainty of her acceptance at any time of their acquaintance as positive to him as that the famished hound would accept food, the closed pimpernel expand in the sunlight. "I was always fond of you, even in poor Pepita's time; though of course, as a man of honour, I could neither encourage nor show my affection. But Virginie! she took me away from the whole world, and I lost you, as well as herself, for that one brief month of happiness!"

His eyes filled up with tears. Though he was wooing his third bride he did not conceal his regret for his second.

By an effort of maidenly reserve over feminine sympathy, Josephine refrained from throwing her arms round his neck and weeping on his shoulder for pity at his past sorrow. She had none of the vice of jealousy; and she could honestly and tenderly pity the man whom she loved for his grief at the loss of the woman whom he had preferred to herself. She did however refrain; and Sebastian could only guess at her impulse. But he made a tolerably accurate guess, though he seemed to see nothing. He knew that his way was smooth before him, and that he need not give himself a moment's trouble about the ending. And though, as a rule, a man likes the excitement of doubt and the sentiment of difficulties to be overcome, still there are times when, if he is either very weary or too self-complacent to care to strive, he is glad to be assured that he has won before he has wooed, and has only to claim the love that is waiting for him. Which was what Mr. Dundas felt now when he noted the simplicity with which Josephine showed her heart while believing she was hiding it so absolutely, and knew that he had only to speak to have the whole thing concluded.

"And now I have only half a heart to offer you," he said plainly. "The other half is in the grave with my beloved. But if you care to ally yourself to one who has been the sport of sorrow as I have,

if you care to make the last years of my life happy, and will be content with the ashes rather than the fires, I will do my best to make you feel that you have not sacrificed yourself in vain. Will it be a sacrifice, Josephine?" he asked in a lower tone, and with the exquisite sweetness which love and pleading give to even a common-place voice.

"I have loved you all my life," said Josephine simply; and then dissolving into happy tears she hid her face in his breast, and felt that heaven was sometimes very near to earth.

Sebastian passed his arms round her ample comely form and pressed her to his heart, tenderly and without affectation. It was pleasant to him to see her devotion, to feel her love; and though he disliked tears, as a man should, still, tears of joy were tribute which he did not despise in essence if the method might have been more congenial.

"Dear Josephine!" he said. "I always knew what a good soul you were!"

This was the way in which Sebastian Dundas wooed and won an honest-hearted English lady who loved him, and who, virtue for virtue, was infinitely his superior; a wooing in striking contrast with the methods which he had employed to gain the person of a low-class half-savage Spanish girl, whom he had loved for her beauty and who took him for her pleasure; also in striking contrast with those employed to gain Madame de Montfort, a clever adventuress who balanced him, in hand, against her bird in the bush, and decided that to make sure of the less was better than to wait for the chance of the greater. But Josephine felt nothing humiliating in his lordliness. She loved him; she was a woman devoid of self-esteem; hence humiliation from his hand was impossible.

Just then pretty little Fina came running to the window from the garden, where she was playing.

"Come here, poppet," said Mr. Dundas, holding out his left hand—his right round comely Josephine.

She came through the open window and ran up to him.

"Nice papa," she lisped, stroking his hand.

He took her on his knee.

"I have given you a new mamma, Fina," he said, kissing her; and then he kissed Josephine for emphasis. "Will you be good to her and love her very much? This is your mamma."

"Will you love me, little Fina?" asked Josephine in a voice full of emotion, taking the child's fair head between her hands. "Will you like me to be your mamma?"

"Yes!" cried Fina, clapping her hands. "I shall like a nice new mamma instead of Leam. I hate Leam. She is cross and has big eyes."

"Oh, we must not hate poor Leam!" remonstrated Josephine tenderly.

"I cannot understand the child's aversion," said Mr. Dundas in a half-musing, half-suspicious way. "Leam seems to be all that is good

and kind to her, but nothing that she does can soften the little creature's dislike. It must be natural instinct," he added in a lower voice.

"Yes, perhaps it is," assented Josephine; who would have answered, "Yes, perhaps it is," to anything else that her lover might have said.

"Where is Leam, my little Fina? Do you know?" asked Sebastian of the child.

"In the garden. She is coming in," answered Fina; and at the word Leam passed before the window as Fina had done.

"Leam, my child, come in; I want to speak to you," said her father with unwonted kindness; and Leam too, as Fina had done before her, passed through the open window and came in.

The two middle-aged lovers were still sitting side by side and close together on the sofa. Fina was on her stepfather's knee, caressing his hand and Josephine's which were clasped together on her little lap; while his other arm encircled the substantial waist of his promised bride whose disengaged hand rested on his shoulder.

"Leam," said the father, "I have given you ——"

He stopped. The name which he was about to utter, with all its passionate memories, was left unsaid. He remembered in time Leam's former renunciation of the new mamma whom he had once before proposed.

"I have asked Josephine Harrowby to be my wife," he said after a short pause. "She has consented, and made me very happy. Let me hope that it will make you happy too."

He spoke with forced calmness and something of sternness under his apparent serenity. In heart he was troubled, remembering the past and half fearing the future. How would she bear herself? Would she accept his relations pleasantly, or defy and reject as before?

Leam looked at the triad gravely. It was a family group with which she felt that she had no concern. She was outside it; as much alone as in a strange country. She knew in that deepest self which does not palm and lie to us that all her efforts to put herself in harmony with her life were in vain. Race, education, and that fearful memory stood between her and her surroundings; and she never lost the perception of her loneliness, save when she was with Edgar. At this moment she looked on, as at a picture of love and gladness with which she had nothing in common; nevertheless she accepted what she saw, and if not expansive—which was not her way—was, as her father said afterwards, "perfectly satisfactory." She went up to the sofa slowly, and held out her hand.

"You are welcome," she said gravely to Josephine; but the contempt which she had always had for her father, though she had tried so hard of late to wear it down, surged up afresh, and she could not turn her eyes his way. What a despicable thing that must be, she thought, that thing he called his heart, to shift from one to the other so easily! To her, the keynote of whose character was single-hearted devotion, this facile fluid love which could be poured out with equal warmth on every

one alike, was no love at all. It was a degraded kind of self-indulgence, for which she had no respect; and though she did not feel for Josephine as she had felt for Madame—as her mother's enemy—she despised her father even more now than before.

Also a rapid thought crossed her mind, bringing with it a deadly trouble.

"If Josephine was her stepmother, would Major Harrowby be her stepfather?" They were brother and sister, and she had an idea that the family followed the relations of its members. She did not know why, but she would rather not have Major Harrowby for her stepfather, or for any relation by law. She preferred that he should be wholly unconnected with her—just her friend unrelated; that was all.

"Thank you, dear Leam," said Josephine gratefully; and Leam, looking at her with large mournful eyes, said in a soft but surprised tone of voice, "Thank me—why?"

"That you accept me as your stepmother so sweetly, and do not hate me for it," said Josephine.

Leam glanced with a pained look at Fina.

"I have done with hate," she answered. "It is not my business what papa likes to do."

"Sensible at last!" cried Mr. Dundas with a half-mocking, half-kindly triumph in his voice.

Leam turned pale.

"But you must not think that *I* forget mamma as you do," she said with emphasis, her lip quivering.

"No, dear Leam, I would be the last to wish that you should forget your own mamma for me," said Josephine humbly. "Only try to love me a little for myself, as your friend, and I will be satisfied. Love always your own mamma, but me too a little."

"You are good," said Leam softly, her eyes filling with tears. "I do like you very much:—but mamma—there is only one mother for me! None of papa's wives could ever be mamma to me!"

"But friend?" said Josephine half sobbing.

"Friend?—yes," returned Leam; and for the first time in her life she bent her proud little head and kissed Josephine on her cheek. "And I will be good to you," she said quietly; "for you are good."

She did not add, "And Edgar's sister."

The Families approved of this marriage. Every one said it was what ought to have been when Pepita died, and that Mr. Dundas had missed his way and lost his time by taking that doubtful Madame meanwhile. Adelaide and her mother were especially congratulatory; but though the rector said he was glad for the sake of poor Josephine who had always been a favourite of his, yet he could not find terms of too great severity for Sebastian. For a man to marry three times—it was scarcely moral; and he wondered at the Harrowbys for allowing one of their own to be the third venture. And then, though Josephine was a good girl

enough, she was but a weak sister at the best ; and to think of any man in his senses taking her as the successor of that delightful and superior Madame !

Mrs. Birkett dissented from these views ; and said it would keep the house together and be such a nice thing for Fina and Leam ; both would be the better for a woman's influence and superintendence, and Josephine was very good.

"Yes," said the rector with his martial air ; "good enough, I admit ; but confoundedly slow."

To Edgar, Adelaide expressed herself with delightful enthusiasm. She was not often stirred to such a display of feeling.

"It is *the* marriage of the county," she said with her prettiest smile ; "the very thing for every one."

"Think so ?" was his reply made by no means enthusiastically. "If Joseph likes it, that is all that need be said ; but it is a marvel to me how she can—such an unmanly creature as he is !—such a muff all through !"

"Well, I own he would not have been my choice exactly," said Adelaide with a nice little look. "I like something stronger and more decided in a man ; but it is just as well that we all do not like the same person ; and then, you see, there are Leam and the child to be considered. Leam is such an utterly unfit person to bring up Fina ; she is ruining her indeed as it is, with her capricious temper and variable moods ; and dear Josephine's quiet amiability and good sense will be so valuable among them ! I think we ought to be glad, as Christians, that such a chance is offered them."

"Whatever else you may be, at least you are no hypocrite," said Edgar with a forced smile that did not look much like approbation.

She chose to accept it simply.

"No," she answered quite tranquilly, "I am not a hypocrite."

"At all events you do not disguise your dislike to Leam Dundas," he said.

"No, why should I ? I confess it honestly, I do not like her. The daughter of such a woman as her mother was ; up to fifteen years of age a perfect savage ; a heathen with a temper that makes me shudder when I think of it ; capable of any crime—no ! don't look shocked, Edgar !—I am sure of it ! That girl could commit murder ! and I verily believe that she did push Fina into the water, as the child says, and that if Josephine had not got there in time, she would have let her drown. And if I think all this, how can I like her ?"

"No, if you think all this, as you say you cannot like her," replied Edgar coldly. "I don't happen to agree with you however ; and I think your assumptions monstrous."

"You are not the first man blinded by a pair of dark eyes, Edgar," said Adelaide with becoming mournfulness. "It makes me sorry to see such a mind as yours dazzled out of its better sense ; but you will perhaps come right in time. At all events, Josephine's marriage with Mr.

Dundas will give you a kind of fatherly relation with Leam that may show you the truth of what I say."

"Fatherly relation—what rubbish!" cried Edgar, irritated out of his politeness.

Adelaide smiled.

"Well, you would be rather a young father for her," she answered. "Still the character of the relation will be as I say—fatherly."

Edgar laughed impatiently.

"Society will accept it in that light," said Adelaide gravely, glad to erect even this barrier of shadows between the man of her choice and the girl whom she both dreaded and disliked.

And she was right in her supposition. Brother and sister marrying daughter and father would not be well received in a narrow society like North Aston, where the restrictions of law and elemental morality were supplemented by an adventitious code of denial which put nature into a strait waistcoat, and shackled freedom of action and opinion with chains and bands of iron. Perhaps it was some such thought as this on his own part that made Edgar profess himself disgusted with this marriage, and declare loudly that Sebastian Dundas was not worthy of such a girl as Josephine. His hearers smiled in their sleeves when he said so, and thought that Josephine Harrowby, thirty-five years of age, fat and freckled, was not so far out in her running to have got at last—they always put in "at last"—the owner of Ford House. It was more than she might have expected, looking at things all round; and Edgar was as unreasonable as proud men always are. With the redundancy of women as we have it in England, happy the head of the house who can get rid of his superfluous petticoats anyhow in honour and sufficiency! This was the verdict of society on the affair; the two extremities of the line wherefrom the same fact was viewed.

As for Josephine herself, dear soul, she was supremely happy. It was almost worth while to have waited so long, she thought, to have such an exquisite reward at last. She went back ten years in her life and grew quite girlish and fresh-looking; and what was wanting in romance on Sebastian's part was made up in devotion and adoration on hers.

Sebastian himself took pleasure in her happiness, her adoration, the supreme content of her rewarded love. It made him glad to think that he had given so good a creature so much happiness; and he warmed his soul at his rekindled ashes as a philosophic widower generally knows how.

Only Leam began to look pitifully mournful and desolate, and to shrink back into a solitude which Edgar never invaded and whence even Alick was banished; and Edgar was irritable, unpleasant, moody, would take no interest in the approaching marriage, and, save that his settlements on Josephine were liberal, seemed to hold himself personally aggrieved by her choice, and conducted himself altogether as if he had been injured somehow thereby, and his wishes disregarded.

He was very disagreeable, and caused Joseph many bitter hours ; till at last he took a sudden resolution, and, to the relief of every one at the Hill, went off to London ; promising to be back in time for "that little fool's wedding with her sentimental muff," as he disrespectfully called his sister and Sebastian Dundas ; but giving no reason why he went, and taking leave of no one—not even of Adelaide nor yet of Leam.

Any Poet to his Mistress.

IMMORTAL VERSE ! Is mine the strain
To last and live ? As ages wane
Will one be found to twine the bays,
And praise me then as now you praise ?

Will there be one to praise ? Ah, no !
My laurel leaf may never grow ;
My bust is in the quarry yet,—
Oblivion weaves my coronet.

Immortal for a month—a week !
The garlands wither as I speak ;
The song will die, the harp's unstrung,—
But, singing, have I vainly sung ?

You deign'd to lend an ear the while
I trill'd my lay. I won your smile.
Now, let it die, or let it live,—
My verse was all I had to give.

The linnet flies on wistful wings,
And finds a bower, and lights and sings ;
Enough if my poor verse endures
To light and live—to die in yours.

FREDERICK LOCKER.

Assistant Masters.

HE would be a bold theorist who would assert, in the face of facts and universal experience, that abstract justice holds anything like supreme sway in earthly affairs. Our lives are regulated by no such grand yet rigid rule. Not only do those mysterious decrees which govern human happiness and misery in our most intimate relations go upon principles entirely unknown to us and reducible to no rule or system, but even the more easily followed economy of external life baffles all our attempts to bring it within the lines of positive right and wrong, desert and recompence. Still, as in ancient times, the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong. Industry and worth plod wearily along, while luck leaps to success without apparent effort, and men of secondary gifts win the prizes of life over the heads of their betters in almost every department of human labour. Now and then the world hears a special outburst of triumph over some professional appointment. Because why? The wonderful event has happened that the best man, the really worthy, has for once in a way attained the eminence he deserved; and the very gratulations afford an uncomfortable proof how far such an event is from being the rule. Neither high mental powers nor even that force of character which is of all human qualities the least likely to be crushed or thrust aside, involve, as they ought in justice to do, any certainty of reward or success; much less are the moral qualities of our nature sure of recompence or appreciation. So evidently is this the case, that what we may call the religious theory of life adopts as one of its fundamental principles the very opposite view, and teaches that punishment, affliction, and trouble are the lot of the best men in this world, and that evil is necessarily the reward of good so long as we remain in this probationary sphere. It is scarcely necessary to go so far to justify what every day's experience proves—that justice is not the rule of mortal existence, nor right the absolute mistress of the world. And yet there is a secondary sense in which justice is all in all, and right a necessity of existence. The general mind cannot keep its healthfulness, cannot retain its energy, without the support of a general harmony between what ought to be and what is. Wrong we all allow must exist, or at least always has existed, and shows little sign of any intention to disappear out of the world; but an allowed, defended, and justified wrong is, we all agree in believing, the thing most dangerous to the commonwealth, most impossible and inconsistent with all principles of life. Privileges of certain classes before the law, legislation in the interests of certain classes against others, tyrannical

rights of all kinds, have become obnoxious to the general run of mankind, as open offences against that grand law of equity which, though it cannot reach an abstract completeness, yet keeps up a certain standard of what can be and what cannot be in the world. It would be rash to say that the days of absolute power are over. There are politicians and there are theorists who still see in the sway of the most powerful the panacea for all troubles; and there can be no doubt that to the poetic imagination there is something captivating in the idea of a great individual mind, elevated by its native grandeur above all suspicion of unworthy motive, and above all alloy of personal feeling, taking upon itself by divine right, as the best and wisest, the responsibility of guiding its fellow-creatures, deciding all questions for them, and arranging their life according to the ideal of a higher intelligence than theirs. This conception, worthy the days of heroes and of demigods, has had much attraction for many minds, and still retains its hold over a few enthusiasts; but it has ceased to commend itself, if it ever did commend itself, to the general intelligence. In England, indeed, we have never believed heartily in Cæsar. That consciousness of being more or less able to take care of ourselves which education and habit have cultivated in us, and the deep preference we have for our own way individually, has so cut down our appreciation of absolute rule, that it may be almost said to be non-existent as regards ourselves—though we may be by no means sure that it is not the best thing for the French. Nor has Providence favoured us with any such revelation of heroic virtue in recent days as to impress the idea in any way on the national mind. The development of opinion in England has taken an entirely different direction. It has expressed its preference for individuality over absolutism by modifying every power by conditions, and defending every subordinate by multiplied and elaborate expedients against oppression. All the old trades which originated in the earlier days of the race, and which have been recognised for centuries—the “professions” formally so called—the religious instructors of the nation, its defenders in war, its legislators in peace—have brought with them out of antiquity a whole panoply and armour of defence against the encroachments of their superiors. The clergy are under little more than nominal authority, and may defy all the Bench of Bishops to harm them as long as they remain within the letter of a very elastic and accommodating law. The lawyer can be touched only through a solemn tribunal of Benchers, as good judges as the Lord Chancellor himself, steeped in legal caution and regard for precedent. The soldier and the sailor alike are protected by their right to be judged by their peers, and cannot be “broke” by the Commander-in-Chief himself without that public and professional sanction. Every one of these public officers, however humble, has his carefully devised safeguard against tyrannical action on the part of his superiors. These things come to us from the days when theories of government did not exist, when the strong man who seized the power was not by any means invariably the best and

wisest, but required to have every kind of proviso and condition forced upon him, or wrested from him, by which life could be made possible under a sway too powerful to be shaken off or ignored. There is little reason to suppose that our forefathers liked it when a high-handed conqueror caught the reins out of the feeble hands no longer able to hold them, and made a "strong government" of cruel force over them in their fat content and prosperity. But they were sensible practical men, whose idea of life was that which so many of their descendants still hold—that ideal right or wrong was hopeless to struggle for, even if they had perception enough to know what it was, which is by no means certain; but that the one thing to do was to make ordinary existence possible by exacting a concession here and imposing a condition there which would fetter the "strong" ruler in spite of himself.

There are, however, various professions existing among us, created by the exigencies of modern times, which have been either left to the guidance of chance, or their luck, without any theory of government at all—as is the case with that newly organised Civil Service which has lately developed into such gigantic proportions—or placed under a new spick and span theory as fresh from the mint as any of those new constitutions which we delight in sneering at as they appear in revolutionised Latin countries. The occupation of public schoolmaster is one of these. It is only of late that it has risen into the importance of a profession. Up to very recent days the old tradition which left education in the hands of the clergy has so far retained its hold over us that the pedagogue has been but another and temporary aspect of the clergyman, who, with his primary profession to fall back upon and a good living in view, had no necessity for other protection than that which custom gave him, and after employing the most active part of his life in gathering honey in these academic groves, retired to the fat and comfortable tranquillity of a college living at the end of his labours. Within the last twenty years, however, a change has gradually crept over the system of teaching, and little by little the character of the schoolmaster has been changed. It has ceased to be necessary that he should go through the form of devoting himself to another profession, when the vocation he really adopts is one so fundamentally different, and it has come to be recognised that a layman is in reality as well qualified for the task of instructing boys in their Latin grammar as if he had been doubly ordained. This circumstance has done more than anything else to classify and identify the office upon which gradually men of talent and character have begun to turn their eyes as a pursuit worth following—not as a stepping-stone to something better, but as sufficiently worthy in itself to be their deliberate choice for life. The crush and strain of our present busy living, the crowding up of new candidates out of the lower sections of society to join in the competition for any office worth having, increases the importance of each securely established means of livelihood, and interests not only the individuals who adopt it, but the public generally, in securing its safety and well-

being. It is for the benefit alike of those who may take up the position of schoolmaster, and of those whose education must profit or must suffer according as the trade of schoolmaster is highly or basely esteemed, to do all that in them lies to constitute that trade upon a satisfactory footing. That the best men should be induced to join it, not driven away from it, is to the interest of all of us ; and it is certain that the best men will not present themselves where the rewards of work are petty, neither will they give up the fair play of an open struggle with difficulties for the restrictions and limits of a profession unorganised and insecure.

The position of Assistant Masters at a Public School is a very interesting and important position in the present constitution of society, and it is in many respects peculiar and unlike anything else. Their occupation requires in the first place no ordinary training. The distinctions of academical life count for much in England, notwithstanding the fact that pure intellect has but a very inadequate recognition in English society. Mr. Gladstone's first-class is still an honour which is remembered to his credit, notwithstanding all the mature distinctions of life which he has gained since then ; yet most public schoolmasters are expected to be first-class men, starting as a matter of course from the level which to most other men it is a lasting honour to have attained. This presupposes the most costly education known to the world, equivalent to a small fortune in money, and involving the sacrifice of several years of early manhood, in addition to the ordinary training time of life. No man in his senses would make such an outlay, or permit it to be made, in the case of his son, without fully investigating the rewards and the securities for his after career.

The life of a schoolmaster has many drawbacks : it is tedious, laborious, trying to the temper ; and its routine may well produce, especially in the beginning, a certain state of stupefaction in the mind of the unfortunate whose life is spent in correcting the mistakes of small boys, and cutting channels of communication between them and the world of truth, wisdom, and genius, which is so hopelessly far apart from their opaque intelligence ; but yet it is a worthy life, full of high objects of ambition, and more satisfactory possibilities of action and influence than most occupations hold out. Even in its smallest beginnings the conscientious worker may have the satisfaction of feeling that it is not mere daily bread he is earning, but that the material he works on is the highest and most important, and that more or less he is shaping the mind of the next generation while he toils through even his least attractive work. A great many of us have to work without this stimulant and support, to satisfy ourselves with simple exercise of honesty, turning out the skilfullest manufacture we can for life's most ordinary uses, as the sole equivalent which it is in us to give for all the comforts and loveliness with which we are enabled to sweeten our existence ; but the schoolmaster may always have the consoling consciousness of worthy work to keep up his heart and courage. And his

reward for his work is not of this ethereal kind alone. He has few or no great prizes to reckon upon, but he has the chance at an early age of a good income, securing for him those easy conditions of life in which the essence of personal well-being lies. At five or six and twenty a young man of good ability and reputation at Eton, holding the position of a classical master and tutor, without a house, may find himself in receipt of an income of a thousand a year—a little less or a little more, but rather more than less—thus beginning life in circumstances of comfort, which many of his contemporaries only attain after the labours of years. He can marry, which so few men of that age, dependent on their own exertions, can hope to do; or he can surround himself with such aesthetic luxuries as suit the taste of his generation; or he can travel, and make himself familiar with everything throughout the Old World which it is most interesting to know—for this desirable life is made still more desirable by the bright intervals of holidays which intersect it, nearly four months in the year being absolutely free of duty and responsibility, to be used as he pleases, for pleasure or for profit. Nothing could be more enviable or more perfect than these foundations of his life; but the youthful chapter is perhaps the brightest; there is no advance before him commensurate with the triumphant beginning. When he gets a little older, and succeeds to a boarding-house, greater facilities for money-making are indeed in his power, and in other times at least, modest but comfortable fortunes have been accumulated in this way. But to get his fair chance, he must have capital to invest in the house besides the capital of his education and elaborate training which he invests to start with. The house and furniture of one of the large houses which “pay” represents a considerable amount of money, and brings in a certain mercantile character into the profession; and it is not uncommon to hear the complaint made that almost any other profession would recompense better the junction of skilled labour and real capital which is necessary in this second stage of the public school-master’s career; and he has nothing or next to nothing further to look for. True, out of the body of Assistant Masters the great potentates of the trade, the Head-Masters, are chosen; but the prizes are so few that this chance is hardly worth taking into consideration among the prospects of his life.

It will thus be seen that the schoolmaster, though his position is in some respects an enviable one among the hard-working members of the professional classes, has no exceptional advantages, but only a reasonable recompence, strictly kept within moderate limits by the jealous supervision of all around him. Everybody who has to pay grudges more or less, and exaggerates more or less, the gains of the individual whom he pays; and though the parents of public schoolboys are generally appreciative of the advantages of the education thus bestowed, there are grudgings and grumblings involved which to sensitive persons are unpleasant enough, and make a darker side to the picture. It is not

under any circumstances an easy life. The Assistant Master who does his duty conscientiously must be at it early and late: his days are far longer than any labourer would consent to. A bricklayer's drudge would feel himself persecuted and oppressed by a much less amount of exertion. And the work, though great enough in aim to encourage a man to forget its pettiness in detail, is petty, tedious, and depressing as carried on day by day and hour by hour—a round of little blunders to correct, of stupidity and indifference to struggle against, with only here and there a glimmer of sense and intelligence to cheer him on. It is difficult to imagine how any brain can endure for a number of years the horrible treadmill work of examining exercises for instance, only a few of which can boast even the piquant absurdity which tempts the fagged schoolmaster to the refreshment of a laugh; and we can imagine no nightmare more terrible than the feverish vision of that pile of schoolboy papers which ruthless fate renews weekly to stupefy the senses of the unhappy pedagogue. Thus he works hard for his gains, such as they are; morning rest and evening leisure are equally impossible to him; his supposed half-holidays are often spent in the “toils of the pupil-room,” which is an addition to his public labours, quite unthought-of and unrecognised by the public; and the nights, which other men enjoy with their families, are spent in “private business” with his pupils, ending off in many cases with a round of visits made in their rooms to boys, who are often shy, or suspicious, or impatient, and have no kind response to make. Thus the public schoolmaster labours at his many duties. Young and free, with his immediate pecuniary success and his gay holidays, he is to be envied; but older, in the full midday of life, with his great house and his great cares, the horizon closing in upon him, and possibilities of advancement dying out, while his old comrades are rising fast into riches and honours, he is not so much to be envied. Soon, very soon, he gets to the end of his tether. He has hard work, and he has comfortable living, and sufficiently good interest upon the money he has invested; but if he worked as hard, and invested as much money in any other profession, the chances are he would earn more and find himself in a better position. Those who are enthusiasts for their profession (and among the new class of Assistant Masters there are fortunately many such) make light of these drawbacks; but they exist, and there is no halcyon region now known upon earth in the Public School.

This being the case, it is with strangely painful feelings that all disinterested spectators must have watched the curious little drama which has lately been played out in the most prominent Public School in England, and which involves a sudden revelation of unsuspected professional perils to which no other educated class of workmen are exposed. Private employers have more or less a recognised right to act capriciously if it seems good to them to do so. They have a right to do what they like with their own, and if they do not find themselves satisfied with

small or great in their service, the right to dismiss must be allowed to them under certain very well understood conditions. The law has, indeed, protected the humblest domestic servant against any exaggeration of caprice in this particular, and has made it imperative that the dismissed employé should have his or her "character," or a good reason for the withholding of it; but that is all it could do. Public servants, however, have always been treated in a much less summary way. Justice has required that it should be more difficult to dismiss them, and that their immediate superiors should have no such power over them as a private employer has over the persons whom he engages in his private affairs. Up to a very recent date the Assistant Masters of the great English Public Schools were under perhaps a confused and somewhat uncertain, but unquestionably a very lenient and gentle, sway. Public interest was not much excited on the matter, and abuses no doubt went on peaceably without any agitation to disturb their calm. A master dismissed was a thing unknown. If he was a very bad master, or more likely, if he made himself disagreeable to his colleagues, he might perhaps be coaxed by a good living into early withdrawal; but even a peremptory tyrant like Dr. Keate dreamt of no harsher measure. This system was no doubt wrong in principle, and very little adapted to serve the interests of a great school, by the action of which, and the standard it kept up, the entire tone of education in England was inevitably affected; and when the public school system was revised and reconstructed in the year 1870 one of the chief subjects of consideration was this very important question. It is only now, however, or within the last year or two, that the new system, which confers absolute power upon the Head-Master, has been fully understood by the profession itself, and even now it is but imperfectly understood by the public. We are so entirely unaccustomed to individual tyranny, or to the exercise of absolute power in any department, that even those who were most closely affected by it regarded with comparative calm the extraordinary legislation which placed their most important interests in the hand of one of their colleagues, raised but a single step above them, by virtue of his office, but in every other respect one of themselves, the first member of the community, no more. It seemed so incredible to all parties that such a power should ever be exercised, that the Assistants thus reduced to the rank of private servants were not even disturbed by the change about which, as a matter of policy, there might be different opinions, but which no man for a moment regarded as the tremendous personal risk it has turned out to be.

We will say nothing of the recent events which have made the history of Rugby remarkable, for the right and wrong in that extraordinary series of commotions was too confused and uncertain to be capable of any satisfactory disentanglement. In a case where everybody seems to have erred, yet where nobody has suffered much, the critic has no particular function. The more recent case, however, is

of a different character. Another Head-Master has exercised his undoubted right in a way very different from that wild onslaught of exasperation by which Dr. Hayman endeavoured to revenge himself upon his tormentors. Dr. Hornby, of Eton, has dismissed at three months' notice, in the most summary way, one of his Assistants, of long standing and well-known character, popular as a tutor in his own sphere, and more widely known and appreciated in the larger world outside than is at all usual. This is not the place to enter into any discussion of the question between them, and, indeed, no personal discussion between two men can be so important as the broader question raised by a step so bold and arbitrary. The character of the gentleman dismissed is unimpeachable, though the case has been much embittered by a running fire of insinuation, artfully ambiguous, by which some guilt unrevealed has been suggested vaguely, though anything definite in the form of an accusation has been withheld. Such a mode of procedure can be judged only in one way by impartial men; but that also is secondary to the chief matter, which is this: that without definite reason given, or open accusation made, upon the strength of his own will alone, an English Head-Master has dismissed an experienced and able assistant, who has given his best services to the school for fifteen years, investing his private resources in the house he held, and concentrating all his prospects for the future, and all his interests in the present, in the place where he naturally expected to spend his whole life. A catastrophe so strange and sudden is, so far as we are aware, quite without parallel in any other branch of the Public Service. If the heads of public offices have such a power in their possession they certainly have not exercised it in any way which could bring them under the notice of the public, and no other functionary of any kind can boast of this power of social life and death. That the general body of Assistant Masters should be painfully disturbed by such an event is only reasonable. It shows in the most vivid way the extraordinary dangers of their position. When one man has fallen at a blow, slain in the dark, without even the opportunity of defending himself, who can tell how many other men may, as their time comes, be pitched headlong down the *oubliette* and made an end of, unsuspecting any such astounding doom? To make all your arrangements for life, or the best part of life, plant your stakes deep in the earth, build your walls of kindly shelter, form your plans for the ideal work which it is every good man's hope to do, something for his children, something for his country, something perhaps, since he is mortal, to leave a worthy reputation behind him; and then to be snatched in a moment from all this, torn out of the soil in which he has taken root, his undertakings destroyed, his schemes blown into the air like so many bubbles—all at the caprice, or by the malice, or from the mistake of another man, no wiser, no better, only one step advanced in official position above himself! Can the reader fancy any event more astounding to the victim, or more appalling to those who may be the victims to-morrow? To the outside

spectator, looking on at his case, the question, how such an anomalous power could have got into existence in England in the latter half of the nineteenth century, is bewildering enough; but for the men who go to sleep as they can every night, with this sword hanging over their heads, not knowing whether to-morrow morning a curt note of dismissal may not come to them with their breakfast, the position is serious beyond measure. If the present exercise of power had been as wise as that of Solomon the case would have been in no way altered, for Head-Masters as a class could not be always expected to possess superior wisdom; and apart from all the circumstances of this individual case, the fact remains, more alarming than any one event, that all the Head-Masters have it in their power to displace any, be he the best Assistant Master that ever was known, without cause and without appeal, when it pleases them and how it pleases them. The plainest words in which this fact can be stated are the most powerful. It is monstrous and incredible—yet it is true.

An absolute king is a dangerous personage; but still there is something in the greatness and remoteness of a throne which makes him really less appalling to the imagination than a petty tyrant. It was not Ahasuerus but Haman who noticed Mordecai in the gate and made such preparations for the hanging of the impertinent bystander. The king is too far off to pay much attention to the trivial incivilities of an ordinary man, and great officials are rarely despotic. They, too, are removed beyond the range at which personal motives tell; they are just, as it were, by mere effect of perspective and distance, which reduce events to their natural place in the great economy of the world. But if you take from among a small community one of their number who is supposed to be a little abler, a little cleverer, a little more notable, than the rest, or who (which is much more easily ascertainable, and helps immensely in the logic of appointments) is known to be a little more highly connected than the rest, and put the power of life and death in his hands, these are the true circumstances under which the executioner flourishes. A man needs to be exceptionally wise and strong in order to free himself altogether from personal dislikes, from those instinctive feelings of rivalry which are so easily kindled between two persons of the same profession, and from all the exasperations of a forced intercourse with an uncongenial person whose presence galls him daily. Which of us would not tremble if some fairy suddenly bestowed upon us the power of annihilating the person whom we regard with most fervour of aversion? How anxious should not we be to get rid of the too-tempting, too-terrible power before nature yielded to the temptation and we flung the thunderbolt! It is almost impossible to imagine a position in which abstract justice would be less likely to prevail. It is more difficult to be magnanimous to a petty offender at our elbow than to a great criminal at a distance, and it is next to impossible not to be influenced in feeling in the long run by a series of insignificant disagreements, even on the most indifferent subjects. Little continually recurring differences of opinion resolve themselves into

a system of determined opposition and contradiction when we regard them closely, as we are forced to regard the conduct of our nearest neighbours; and even members of the same family often get to believe that it is enough for them to adopt one view of a subject to make the other prevail with their favourite domestic antagonist. This tendency of human nature is so perfectly well known that to put it into words is little better than giving utterance to a truism. But even that common and simple knowledge of human nature which the race has laboriously acquired by oft-repeated experiment, and which represents the very *a b c* of moral information, is not to be expected to influence the maker of constitutions, whether for an empire or for a school. Let us inquire, however, upon what principle, or theory of probable usefulness, the Commission on Endowed Schools suffered itself to be guided when it made the Head-Master an absolute ruler, the only specimen of the race tolerated in England at the present day.

We believe we are not far wrong in saying that the chief reason for the erection of this new despotism was not so much a theory as an example. The supreme authority of the Head-Master in his official capacity is founded upon no principle of reason or careful consideration of what is best, but upon a foundation at once more solid and more futile—the memory of Dr. Arnold. Because once in the course of the ages there has been a Head-Master of very high and noble qualities, whom some of us regard as half-divine, therefore let us erect (we can imagine our legislators saying) a pedagogic throne, untrammelled by Parliamentary or other restrictions, upon which the abstract Head-Master ever hereafter shall, to the honour and glory of Arnold, sit and judge the world. Arnold had not—what great man ever had?—sufficient reverence shown to him while he lived; but if we endow his successors, and even the successors of his colleagues in office, till the end of time, with that mark of infallibility and that sceptre of power which was his right, shall we not have done all that man can do to make up to his shade for the scanty appreciation with which he met in his life? This, we understand, was the real basis upon which the new authority was founded, and all the details of legislation on the subject are carefully adapted to keep up this leading idea. We have said that such a foundation was at once more solid and more futile than any theory; more solid, in that many minds are capable of perceiving greatness, or rather of perceiving that the leaders of opinion have decided that a certain man is great—whom such unsubstantial things as ideas would puzzle mightily; but futile in so far as it is certain that no second Arnold has arisen, or perhaps may ever arise, to exercise the power specially instituted in his honour. And we doubt whether even the great Apostle of hero-worship himself, with all his indignant certainty that the best man should possess the absolute direction of everything, would think it expedient to place the same power in the hands of the successors of the best man simply because they were his successors, as if the sacred virtue

which belonged to him must somehow linger in his seat—a notion in which all the imbecile dynasties of the world have had their origin.

Dr. Arnold was in himself a great man; but his influence has been of very doubtful advantage so far, to the educational legislation of the age. "We must take care not to do anything which might circumscribe the action of a man of genius," is said gravely, while we are in the very act of discussing the mischievous liberty enjoyed by various men who evidently are not men of genius; and this curious craze runs through all the discussions that have recently arisen on this subject—oppression, undeserved suffering, wrongful punishment, being nothing apparently to the chance of perhaps enfeebling at some remote period the flight of that Head-Master of the future who shall be, or may be, of the highest order of men. But men of this highest order may be trusted to break any feeble bonds that attempt to hold them, whereas we all know the disastrous effects that followed the efforts of the frog to inflate himself into bull-like grandeur of size and bellow. This latter is a far more likely danger than the distant peril of repressing genius, from which we do not see any likelihood of immediate suffering.

Besides, however, the curious negation of individual rights which this system involves, another result, almost more important, presents itself to the spectator as inevitable. The absolute supremacy of the Head-Master must, sooner or later, unless the Head-Master is a man of singular candour, magnanimity, and liberality of mind, end in the reign of absolute uniformity in the school. A great English school is of all places in the world the one least adapted for the forms of tyrannical government. One of its great advantages is that the boys trained in it are subject to the influence of many minds differing in character, in calibre, and even in opinion. The freedom of individual thought and the developments of independent intellect are nowhere of greater importance. Nothing more fatal to the special characteristics of such an institution could be, than any attempt to reduce a body of thirty or forty educated men to one level, pervaded by one unchanging tone and tendency, and following one rigid rule; it might be done, no doubt, by vigorous and persevering manipulation, but such a result would be fatal to the working of the public school system as recognised among us. In any circumstances a number of men trained in the same way, and engaged in the same kind of work, have a disposition to fall into monotony and the jog-trot of routine; and a wise system would encourage rather than repress the stir of new opinions and even those modifications of method which are the evidences of a new life. But it would be unreasonable to expect from a mere mortal that he should be so wise as this. One of the chief dangers of the pedagogic mind is the desire to conform other minds to its own, and secure universal sway for its pet systems and modes of thinking; and it is hard to imagine anything more likely to produce mental collapse and stagnation than the power to enforce this, with which recent law-making has endowed the heads of the great schools. The attempt at Rugby was quite logical and in conformity with

legal rights, but it was not conducted with any judgment, nor had the man who exercised those rights sufficient force of character to impose upon public opinion, or to resist the outcry which his proceedings called forth. But it is quite possible that a Head-Master with an equally tyrannical impulse, but less shrill, more circumspect and rendered impervious by nature to external criticism, might clear his school of every independent agent, and reduce his Assistants to mere slaves and copyists. A man who is not rich and who has a family to support will stretch a good many points of compliance, and bear a great deal of mortification before he will consent to be ruined; while the younger men who have more heart to resist can be plucked out or wedged out by the exercise of a little skill and care. Such a state of affairs is surely beyond all apology or defence, and that it should be kept up to the detriment of an entire profession, sapping their independence, their spirit and courage, for the sake of that imaginary man of genius who may some time arise and be able to bear heroically this wonderful burden of honour, is a solemn folly, which only the seriousness of the harm it may do keeps from absurdity. Even the man of genius himself might not conjoin wisdom with his other great qualities. And what if it was the Assistant and not the Head-Master who was the man of genius—a chance which does not seem to have occurred to any one concerned? In such a case, who can doubt that it would be he, and no other, who must inevitably be the chosen victim?

La Scala.

IN the golden age of Italian opera, Milan might fairly have laid claim to the title of musical capital of Italy. The Fenice at Venice, the Apollo at Rome, and the San Carlo of Naples, could each reckon up its memorable "long runs" and famous *premieres*, but for number and brilliancy of operatic triumphs not one of these could compete with La Scala of Milan, the subject of this paper.

Milan's musical reputation is more than fourteen centuries older than the Scala Theatre; St. Ambrose established it by bringing thither his chant, which soon after—on the Empress Justina's deciding that singing should be generally introduced into the churches, "so it might keep up the spirits of the people in troublous times"—was copied or imitated throughout Italy, and in this way became the prototype of all Christian church music. St. Augustine heard it when at Milan, and said that as he listened he was constrained to "weep sweet tears of joy." Even to this day, musical amateurs visit the Duomo with no little curiosity, there to take note of its correct and traditional rendering. With church music, however, we have not here to deal. But it is a mistake, though one common to many writers, to suppose that all even of the operatic associations of Milan are centred in the Scala. The old Royal Ducal Theatre had quite a store of interesting memories attached to it. It was a fine house, fitted up in a style of almost unheard-of luxury—in those days; facing every box, on the other side of the gallery, was an elegant sitting-room, with a fire-place and card-tables: the stage was celebrated for the splendour of its *mise en scène*, a characteristic far from common at that period. The performances took place all the week round excepting Fridays, and with this continued strain on their exertions it is not to be wondered that the principal artists fell ill now and then, and were obliged to disappoint their patrons. On one occasion, in 1770, the audience were informed that their favourite Garibaldi, an excellent tenor singer, would not be forthcoming that evening. His part had to be cut out, and the opera was proceeding flatly enough, when the baritone who played the querulous "heavy father," and whose business it was to soundly rate his son (the absent tenor), hit upon the expedient of vigorously admonishing the prompter instead, which so pleased the simple-minded audience that they went away quite consoled for Garibaldi's non-appearance.

It was for the Royal Ducal Theatre, as we have ascertained by investigations made on the spot, that Mozart composed his two operas,

Mitridate and *Lucio Silla*, which Henry Beyle (de Stendahl) states to have been written for the Scala. There is no more delightful episode in all musical history than that of these fledgeling flights of the composer of the *Zauberflöte*. When old Luitpold Mozart took Wolfgang Amadeo to Milan, the musical world was already cognisant of the existence of the wonderful child who at six years old had written a full scored *concerto*, the only objection to which was, that it was so difficult nobody could play it, but his operatic genius had yet to be revealed. At this time he was a merry joyous boy, brimming over with fun and drollery—somewhat of an *enfant terrible*, who told his mind to kings and princes, more especially if they played the violin out of tune in his hearing—but the most loving and loveable little soul on earth. An entire child, revelling in the *Arabian Nights*, toiling over his sums, jumping and capering from one end of the room to the other, sending millions of kisses to his “dear mamma,” and tender inquiries after “Mr. Canary” to his “*Cara sorella*,” but already a splendid performer on the clavier, an exquisite composer, and an acute musical critic! Such letters were never written as those despatched by the brother at Milan to the sister at Salzburg. With what charming *naïveté* the boy speaks of his compositions and of his successes, seeming to have not the slightest suspicion that he is the extraordinary phenomenon every one else considers him. What exuberance of gladness is shown in the multifarious little jokes and mystifications banded to and fro between Nannerl and Wolfgang. He writes to his sister after one of these playful sallies: “I immediately said to papa, ‘Oh! how I do wish I was as clever and witty as she is!’ Then papa answered, ‘Indeed, that is true enough;’ on which I rejoined, ‘Oh! I am so sleepy!’ so he merely replied, ‘Then stop writing.’ *Addio!* pray to God that my opera may be successful. I am, your brother, W. M., whose fingers are weary from writing.” It is to be feared that this was very often the case just at that time, for little Wolfgang was working tremendously hard at the opera *Mitridate*, *Rè di Ponte*, for which he had been *scritturato* at the Royal Ducal Theatre in the year 1770. Indeed, his father seemed rather anxious about the too serious look which appeared on the bright child-face as the result of this severe application, and begged kind friends at home to put a little mirth into their letters so as to make Wolfgang laugh. The boy amused himself in odd moments by talking on his fingers to the deaf and dumb son of the people with whom they lodged; he was exceedingly proud of his proficiency in this art.

When *Mitridate* was nearly finished, a terrible panic occurred—the prima donna expressed her doubts about the arias she had to sing. How was it possible that the small boy of fourteen should have composed a part worthy of being interpreted by the Signorina Antonia Bernasconi? She asked to see her music. Wolfgang desired nothing better. He handed her one, two, three arias. The *cantatrice* eagerly tried them over, and then retired, completely bewildered with the genius of the marvellous child! Not only was the music lovely in itself, but it suited her

voice and style to a nicety. She rehearsed the airs with her *maestro*, Signor Lanpugnani, and the two could find no words for their joy in Wolfgang's compositions. But envious tongues were not wanting; someone went secretly to the Signorina and did his best, or worst, to turn little Wolfgang into ridicule; he had armed himself with a whole set of new airs to the same words by a Turinese Abbé, and he would fain have dissuaded the artist from singing a single note of the original music. However, La Antonia remained staunch and proof against all temptations, and the first stage rehearsal went off so well that the whole array of spiteful folk was completely discomfited. At last the great day arrived—the *fiesta* of San Stefano, November 26, 1770. "Maestro Don Amadeo," as old Luitpold Mozart laughingly calls him, took his place at the clavier. The Royal Ducal Theatre was crammed to the ceiling; the opera was a magnificent success. All over the house were heard ringing cries of "*Evviva il Maestrino!*" intermingled with salvos of applause. What must have been Luitpold Mozart's feelings when he looked out from his box and beheld Wolfgang making his best bow to the vast and delighted audience?

The year after that, Wolfgang brought out at Milan a dramatic *serenata*, which the Empress Maria Theresa had deputed him to compose for the nuptials of the Archduke Ferdinand with a Modenean princess. The veteran Hasse had to write an opera in honour of the same event, but the Milanese quite forgot to applaud "*Il Divino*," as they used to call him, in their enthusiasm for "*Il Cavaliere Filamonico*." Old Mozart declared that he was "quite sorry" that Wolfgang's *serenata* had so utterly knocked Hasse's opera on the head. But the veteran composer seems to have borne no enmity towards his young rival, for he said when he heard the music of *Ascanio in Alba* (the festal *serenata*), "This boy will cause us all to be forgotten"—a prophecy which the sequel almost pathetically verified. In the following year Mozart, then sixteen, wrote *Lucio Silla*, the last work he produced in Italy. During the preparations for its performance he had to undergo numberless annoyances—"through the mismanagement of the blessed theatrical people," old Luitpold wrote—nor did these cease on the night of the first representation (November 26, 1772), for the whole audience was kept waiting in the theatre three hours after the proper time before the performance began. Moreover, the tenor had fallen ill, and a cathedral singer who was hastily put in his place, being quite unaccustomed to the boards, and having in one part to upbraid the prima donna, appeared so painfully in earnest that he looked as if he was going to box her ears. Of course the audience laughed, and it tells much in favour of the discrimination of these Milanese opera-goers that, notwithstanding all attendant mishaps, the opera came off triumphant, and ran some thirty nights. "Wolfgang is well," wrote Luitpold Mozart just at this time, "and while I am writing is making caprioles about the room." Mozart was the same mercurial being to the last; he was always passionately fond of

dancing, in which art he used to say his true taste lay rather than in music.

The Royal Ducal Theatre went the way of all its kind in 1776, when it was destroyed by fire. Two years later a new and magnificent house had been raised upon the site of the church of Santa Maria della Scala, its façade looking on the piazza of the same name, which then had its chief outlet into the Via del Giardino, but is now brought into connection with the Piazza del Duomo by the beautiful Galleria Vittorio Emanuele. The erection of the theatre was the undertaking of Count Ercole di Castelbarco, Prince Menafoglio di Rocca Sinibalda, and one or two other Lombard noblemen, who for the first season retained the management in their own hands. The celebrated Piermarini had drawn the designs after which it was built, and its size was such as enabled it to hold nearly four thousand people; while the great depth of the stage behind the curtain facilitated the attainment of a hitherto undreamt of perfection in scenic and spectacular effect. Salieri—who later became Mozart's bitter enemy—was commissioned to write an opera entitled *Europa riconosciuta* for the opening night, August 3, 1778.

So commenced the first period in the history of La Scala, about which not a little might be said were not musical antiquarianism too rare a taste for details to be much relished relating to the hopes and fears, the failures and successes of Alessandri and Anfossi, of Guglielmi (creator of the *opera buffa*) and Mosca (inventor of the *crescendo*), or even of Paer, Mayer, and Zingarelli. Cimarosa, who produced an opera at the Scala, is indeed still known—or, alas! should we not say known of?—but in this he stands almost alone. It is really melancholy to read over the names of the scores of composers who lived and wrote and gained the suffrages of their generation, and died and passed into everlasting oblivion, not so much because they were intrinsically unworthy of the laurel crowns of posterior fame as in obedience to the inevitable law by which the sun eclipses the twinkling stars of morning. "Le mieux est l'ennemi du bien" in more senses than that usually implied when using the French proverb; and the glory of these men was summarily extinguished by the full glare of Rossini's reputation. Therefore, leaving their forgotten ghosts in undisturbed repose, we will pass on to the days of him who was not inaptly styled *Helios* of Italy.

The circumstances which immediately preceded Rossini's advent in Milan read like a scene in a comedy. Off and on for two or three years he had been engaged in writing operas for the little Teatro San Mosè in Venice, the impresario of which doubtless considered him in the light of a very humble *protégé*, and imagined he could behave as he choose to a *maestro* in his teens. Rossini did not by any means fall in with this view of their mutual relationship, and his roguish humour at length suggested to him a ready and delightful revenge. He secretly put on paper all the ludicrous and outrageous orchestral combinations his fertile brain could furnish and introduced them into the score of the

opera *La Scala di Seta*, which he was then composing for the San Mosè. So well did he manage that the unlucky impresario believed everything to be going on smoothly, and remained in blissful ignorance of the plot that was hatching for him up to the very moment when, on the first representation, he beheld to his horror and dismay the complete staff of violinists break off at the end of each bar in the overture to rap the tin shades of their candlesticks! Matters took just the course Rossini had maliciously foreseen: the tightly-packed audience felt itself personally insulted and hissed furiously; the impresario trembled from head to foot, and the merciless maestro marched out of the theatre, inquiring of him as he passed "Whether he thought now that he had gained much by treating him so cavalierly?" That night he left for Milan.

He was just twenty: the handsomest man of his time, with a heart as light as his purse. Of his art he would talk very much as though it were nothing more than the best joke in the world, but all the while he poured forth melody upon melody, not so much as a bird warbles—for in the song of feathered musicians there seems often a mysterious, an unfathomable depth of passion—but rather as some bubbling fountain throws up its sparkling waters whether it will or no. The libretto of *La Pietra di Paragone*, the opera for which he was *scritturato* at the Scala in 1812, was exactly suited to call into play the inimitable vein of fun and wit that ran through his nature. It is worthy of remark that Rossini's comic operas not unfrequently display as admirable a union between the sense and the music, as that which it is the aim of the present German School to realise in its highest development in *opera seria*, and for this reason they can hardly be fully enjoyed except by a public which is able to follow the dialogue word for word, and so intimately to enter into the spirit of the situations. The fact also that more than two-thirds of a French or English audience are certain not to understand Italian, is only too apt to induce the singers to convert the dialogue into a perfectly unintelligible jargon. It is on record that a Dublin basso, who was suddenly called upon to fill the rôle of Don Basilio, and who could not fix in his memory a single syllable of what he had to say, had recourse to the device of repeating all the names of medicines and Italian operas he could think of, beginning with "sarsaparilla," going boldly on to "puritani" and "la sonnambula," and making a very effective exit with "ipecacuanha!" It is impossible not to admire the beautiful ingenuity of this Hibernian Orpheus; but it puts one sorely out of patience to hear his method practised, quite as barbarously, and not half so cleverly, by the trained artists of great opera houses. The result is especially disastrous in Rossini's comic *chef-d'œuvres*, in which the sound, let alone the sense, absolutely requires a pure and correct rendering of the words. Mario's cultivated, pointed and distinct delivery had almost as much to do with making him *facile princeps* of Almavivas as his never-to-be-forgotten voice and acting.

The plot of *La Pietra di Paragone* may be briefly told. The Marchesa Clarice, a charming young widow, is, with a party of friends, passing her *villeggiatura* in the palace of Count Asdrubal, which stands in the recesses of the forest of Viterbo. The Count is in love with Clarice, but fears that she may be more attracted by his fortune than by himself; on the other hand, whilst Clarice quite returns his passion, she is afraid to encourage it lest he should believe her to be actuated by interested motives. The other characters are a poet (Jocondo), a journalist (Marforio), and an insatiable newsmonger (Pacuvio), who is also connected with the journal. Two young ladies, cousins of the Count, who take counsel together to secure the prize of his hand for one or the other of them, complete the *dramatis personæ*. The story turns on the Count's efforts in search of a touchstone ("Pietra di Paragone") wherewith to test the sincerity of his lady-love's affection. He finally disappears, and returns in the guise of a Turk, to whom he pretends the Count's father has mortgaged his whole property, leaving his son a ruined man. Clarice also, somewhat unnecessarily, assumes a disguise, and comes forward as a captain of hussars—but this had to be contrived because the fair contralto (La Marcolini), to whom Rossini had just then lost his heart, had a fancy to appear armed *cap au pied* and in top-boots. Needless to add, that these several *ruses* result most satisfactorily in an avowal as plainly unmercenary as either side could desire. Some of the most amusing scenes spring from the literary proclivities of the young poet Jocondo. In the first act Don Pacuvio kindly informs this votary of the muses that with one "colpo di giornale" he annihilates a thousand poets? Jocondo, however, preserves a most laudable independence, and ends by challenging Pacuvio's redoubtable ally, Don Marforio, whom he judges to have insulted the Marchioness by daring to pay court to her. Marforio finds himself attacked at his vulnerable point: he is anything but a fire-eater. In an agony of fright he exclaims that he will write a most handsome critique on the poet's last production. "All the more reason that I should despatch you on the spot," replies Jocondo. It should be added that the rôle of Marforio was a caricature of a certain official journalist; and the actor who played the part managed to get hold of a complete suit of the original's clothes, which was recognised with infinite glee by the audience.

The famous *Ecco pietosa* occurs in this opera, but the piece which created the wildest *furor* was the *Sigillera finale*, in which the *soi-disant* Turk rushes about protesting that he will set his seal, or *sigillera*, over all parts of his new domain. The vivacious humour of the music took the town by storm; *Sigillera* was accepted as the cant word of the day, and the Milanese refused to speak of the opera by any other name. Rossini was henceforth literally the idol of society, and with characteristic bravado he addressed his letters home in this way: "*All' ornatissima Signora Rossini, madre del celebre Maestro in Bologna.*"

In 1814 Rossini wrote his second Milanese opera, *L'Aureliano in Pal-*
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mira, the failure of which determined him to change his style and to enter on what may be called his second period. In the same year another of his works was brought out at La Scala (*Il Turco in Italia*), for the *rentrée* of the famous basso Galli on his return from Barcelona. The hero steps upon the stage with the words, appropriate to the occasion:—

Bell' Italia! Al fin ti miro,

Vi saluto amiche sponde.

The audience thought Rossini had scarcely done justice to this greeting, and while they received the singer with enthusiasm they were ostentatiously cold towards the composer. The incident put them out of temper for the rest of the evening, and they were not slow to detect in the really charming music of *Il Turco* certain reminiscences of former works of Rossini, which they deemed a mark of flagrant disrespect to La Scala, "the first theatre in the world!" So Rossini quitted Milan for Naples, which displeased the Milanese yet more. They had not got over their pique when he returned three years later to give them *La Gazza Ladra*; on the contrary, they flocked to the theatre with their minds fully made up to hiss; and Rossini knew it. But *La Gazza Ladra* triumphantly won the day; the intending hissers cheered, bravo'd, viva'd, rose *en masse* every other minute; went, in fact, altogether mad with delight. After the "*Di piacer*," the whole pit sprang upon the benches and stood there while the prima donna repeated the aria. Then they wanted to have it again, but Rossini got up from the piano and made a small speech to the effect that since there was a good deal of music in the part of Ninetta, he feared that if they insisted on Madame Bellocchi's singing the piece in question three times over, she would be unable to go through the whole opera. Grave deliberations ensued, and at last the pit submitted to this ruling.

Rossini's operas now almost monopolized the repertory of La Scala; whatever he produced elsewhere was instantly transferred to the Milanese stage. He wrote, however, but one other opera expressly for Milan, *Bianca e Faliero*, a weak work and a failure.

In the same year that Rossini made his last appearance in La Scala, 1820—a German musician, who was a twelvemonth older than the Italian composer, but who as yet bore a name quite unknown to the world—Giacomo Meyerbeer—came before the Milanese public with his opera, *Marguerite d'Anjou*. Art was to him no joke, but almost a religion. With an income of 80,000*fr.*, he led the life of a hermit in the midst of the gay Lombard capital, seeing no one, and working fifteen hours a day. *Marguerite d'Anjou* met with the greatest success, and although Meyerbeer was wont in later years to call his Italian operas "the sins of his youth," he did not disdain to put a good many *moreaux* from them into one at least of his maturer works, *Le Pardon de Ploermel*, which is, perhaps, the reason that this pastoral masterpiece seems so redolent of youth's aroma.

We must go back for a moment to 1812, to note the appearance of a genius who in his particular *genre* was no less pre-eminent than the Swan of Pesaro, though his name will be probably unfamiliar to the reader. It was in that year that Vignano produced the first of his long series of ballets, which carried the Terpsichorean art to a perfection never before attained and never since surpassed. The ballet had all along been a special and prominent feature of the entertainments at La Scala; it had flourished under all sorts of *régimes*, and had even occasionally taken a political turn, as was the case under the Directory, when *Tell* and *Brutus*, *The Patriot Republicans*, and *Regenerated Italy*, were represented before much-gratified audiences. In later times, also, the greatest *ballerine*—Cerito, Essler, Taglioni, &c.—touched the Scala boards with their nimble feet; but the decade following upon 1812 must yet be remembered as by far the most interesting period of the dance in Milan. The ballets written by Vignano and produced under his direction were exceptional, if not unique. According to his idea, the ballet was the poetry of action. He aimed neither at making it a meaningless show, nor a mere framework for individual displays of grace and agility; but rather the presentation of a visible harmony of colour, expression, and movement. Sixty years ago, the existence of a prismatic gamut, closely analogous to the musical scale—which one of the most beautiful of recent scientific discoveries has revealed to us—was unsuspected save by those who heeded the vague hints contained here and there in some prescient rhapsody of an old-world poet; but Vignano, like all the master-colourists before him, possessed a keen perception of what may now be called the chords and discords of colour. No detail was overlooked by him; in the dresses of the dancers he would not permit the richness or brilliancy of the material to take off the attention from the *ensemble* produced by an exquisite blending of stuffs and shades; every part was made subordinate to the whole in order that a perfectly harmonious impression might be left upon the mind of the spectator. Thus the music, the dancing, the *mise en scène*, and the acting—for the highest powers of the pantomimist were called into requisition—were each kept strictly subject to each other and, to the general effect. How well he succeeded may be guessed from the fact that when Shelley witnessed in 1818 Vignano's grand ballet, *Otello ossia il Moro di Venezia*, he declared that, so far from its distressing his Shakspearian susceptibilities, it was the most splendid exhibition he had ever seen. "The manner," he says, "in which language is translated into gesture, the complete and full effect of the whole as illustrating the history in question, the unaffected self-possession of each of the actors, even to the children, made this choral drama more impressive than I could have conceived possible."

In 1826 Vincenzo Bellini came to Milan. Several years were already past since he left his birthplace amidst the flowers and ashes of Sicily to study counterpoint at the Conservatoire of Naples, and whilst there he had produced one or two works which made the *conosci-*

tori rub their hands and talk of promise; but his fame did not as yet exceed that of a clever student. Luckily, however, the Scala impresario had not the dread of bankruptcy before his eyes as the probable result of patronising youthful talent; and so, hearing rather good reports of the graceful if immature compositions of Bellini, he did not hesitate to engage him to write an opera for Milan. The young musician (the son and grandson of musicians, by the way) hastened to that city, bringing with him letters of introduction which opened to him the houses of several distinguished families, as well as the special commendation of his venerable master Zingarelli, who was still gratefully remembered by the Milanese, for whom he had written his best opera, *Romeo e Giulietta*—a work which contains the celebrated *Ombra adorata*, which it is said the great Napoleon could not listen to without tears in his eyes. Bellini's winning manner, added to his rising genius, soon caused him to become a general favourite, but the most lasting, as well as the most important, friendship formed by him at this period was that of the poet Romani, who was afterwards the writer of nearly all his *libretti*. By him he was furnished with the book of *Il Pirata*, and in something less than a year the opera was ready. Then of course followed the rehearsals: a trying time to every composer, and especially so to young Bellini, who, if he had the good fortune to command Rubini, Tamburini, and Madame Merie Lalande for interpreters of what was to all intents and purposes his maiden work, at the same time suffered not a little from the self-will which these famous artists naturally enough displayed in their dealings with the youthful composer. Rubini seemed obstinately incapable of throwing the needful fire into one piece; Madame Lalande was woefully offended at not having an *aria bravura* in the most inappropriate situation. But Vincenzo could be firm as well as modest when it was a question of art, and he was equally inflexible in requiring more passion of the primo tenore and in denying more scale passages to the prima donna. At last everything went to his highest satisfaction, and on October 27, 1827, he took his place at the piano to conduct the first performance. We may be sure his heart beat loudly upon that occasion; it was, in fact, the turning-point of his reputation. Hitherto he had received rather the encouragement of compatriots than the eulogies of critics. Could he count upon the kindly verdict of his Neapolitan friends being confirmed by the strange and fastidious audience before which he now presented himself? Slight in form, with soft golden hair clustering about his white forehead, a faint colour coming and going on his cheek, and the clear blue eyes more than half inclined to fill with tears of emotion,—such was the appearance of the young *maestro* who stood at the bar of Milanese criticism. A *susurro*, that curious low murmur of approbation peculiar to Italy, went through the crowded house, not less excited by the candid, unassuming bearing of Vincenzo, than by the rumour that had been afloat for several days to the effect that "something really good" might be expected on the production of the new opera. But when

the first note of the music struck up, the critics of Milan—and every Milanese is a critic—remembered they were there as judges. The introduction did not go very smoothly; hardly one bravo followed. Vincenzo's friends held their breath in suspense. But during the tenor aria the faces of the sternest relaxed, the general public warmed, and Rubini had hardly time to finish the last note before a storm of applause burst forth. The *maestro* was compelled to rise ten times in acknowledgment. The success of the opera was assured; the sensitive modesty of Vincenzo's nature made the triumph almost too much for him; he could scarcely conceal the sobs which made it difficult for him to proceed with his task as conductor. In the rest of the performance one or two pieces failed in their effect, but at the conclusion such a stentorian chorus of bravos greeted Bellini's ears that "his joy knew no bounds," as he wrote to his uncle in Catania.

The next opera brought out by Bellini at La Scala was *La Straniera* (1829). An incident happened when the score was nearly completed which might be recommended to the notice of librettists who cavil at making the least alterations to suit the taste of the composer. It was a question of the words to the final aria. Bellini felt conscious they were not what he wanted, that they did not chime in with the spirit of the action; in fact, that he could make nothing of them. He went in despair to Romani, who was a really elegant poet, as well as an enthusiastic believer in his friend's genius. Romani made no difficulties about the matter, but at once wrote him another version. "Would that do?" he asked. "No," answered Bellini. "All right," said the amiable poet; "let us try again." But, alas! the third did no better than the second; nor the fourth, nor the fifth. "I can't for the life of me make out what you want," at last cried Romani. "What I want?" rejoined Bellini. "I want an idea which shall at once express a prayer and a curse, a threat and a delirium," and rushing up to his piano he dashed into a fiery improvisation. After a while he turned round, saying, "That is what I want; do you understand now?" "And here are your words," said Romani, who had penned a sixth version inspired by the *maestro's* playing. Bellini read the lines, and, child of the South that he was, threw himself into the poet's arms! Such was the origin of the famous "Or sei pago, o ciel tremendo," which made the Scala ring with cheers, and which every Milanese was humming before the week was out in which the opera was produced, a very sure sign of popularity, if not of excellence; though old Lulli used to say that he only became fully convinced that his music was good when he heard it sung upon the Pont Neuf. After the favourable reception of the *Straniera* at the Scala, the Catanians struck a medal in Bellini's honour, so proud were they of their fellow-townsmen's success in musical Milan.

We can only note in passing the fate of Bellini's two next works: one a *fiasco* at Parma, the other a success at Venice, the latter being a

Romeo and Juliet, composed in a fortnight. Then he returned to his "dear Milan," as he always called it, but was struck down by a severe illness, and when convalescent kind friends induced him to retire to their villa on the Lake of Como. There—surrounded by the sunlit olives, the pink and white oleanders, the boatmen who sang *cantilene* all through the marvellous moonlight nights, whilst their barks, with lateen sails glided over the gleaming waters, the peasants in whose village *festas* he loved to join—Bellini composed, in two brief summer months, that sweetest of idylls, *La Sonnambula*, not for the Scala, but for the Teatro Carcano at Milan, where Pasta and Rubini took the rôles of Amina and Elvino, the great artist showing herself as admirable in the character of the rustic maiden as in that of the relentless Medea.

Our friends at La Scala were highly jealous of the triumph at the rival house; they went in hot haste to Bellini, and offered him 3,000 ducats, with Pasta and Grisi—a name yet unknown—for interpreters, if he would renew his allegiance to their banner. Bellini applied to Romani for a libretto, and received *Norma*. Fortunate was the *habitué* of the green-room at La Scala in those days! There was to be met the regal Pasta, of whom Talma had said in her youth: "This child has found what I have sought in vain for twenty years"—in the full plenitude of her powers. There also was Giulietta Grisi, Hellenic in that perfect grace and beauty of face and form which were destined to become indelibly associated with the sacred wreath and crescent of the Druidic priestess, now borne by the elder artist who broke into cries of generous admiration as she discerned the budding talents of her youthful rival. "Tu iras loin! Tu prendras ma place! Tu seras Pasta!" exclaimed the Siddons of Song, with all the unselfish enthusiasm of true genius. In the last rehearsal Pasta kept up a running commentary in her droll Franco-Italian *patois* on Giulietta's impersonation of Adalgisa. "Benissima! bene; très bien—pas mal, la piccola," she said, addressing herself to the *maestro*. "How I should love to play *Norma*!" cried Giulietta. "Wait twenty years, and we shall see," replied Bellini. "I will play *Norma* in spite of you, and in less than twenty years," answered the petulant sixteen-year-old beauty. Bellini said, incredulously, "A poco, a poco;" but hardly two years after Giulietta, true to her word, took possession of the rôle, and, as we have said, so strongly identified it with her own personality that even now that she has passed away, and many other and some distinguished artists have essayed it, the mere mention of the part calls to mind her name; and the fame of Grisi in *Norma* has become almost a legend which grey-haired opera-goers still fondly rehearse whenever the younger generation praises some favourite of the day in their hearing.

Wonderful to relate, the first performance of *Norma* fell flat! Here is what poor Bellini wrote to an old fellow-student of his at the Conservatoire of Naples:—

"Milan, Dec. 26th, 1831."

"VERY DEAR FLORIMO,—

"I WRITE to you in grief, bitter grief, which I cannot find words to express, but which you, and you alone, will be able to understand. I have just come home from the Scala. First performance of *Norma*! Will you believe it?—*fiasco! fiasco!* A solemn *fiasco*! To say the truth, the public was severe; it seemed positively to have come with the express purpose of judging and condemning me; and precipitately—at least, so I think—it has consigned my poor *Norma* to the doom of the Druidess herself. I could no longer recognise those dear Milanese who received enthusiastically, with joyful faces and warm hearts, *Il Pirata*, *La Straniera*, and *La Sonnambula*. And yet I thought I had given these works a worthy sister in *Norma*! Unhappily it has not been so. I was deceived; I have committed a blunder; my forecast has proved false, and my hopes illusionary. Well, in spite of it all, if perchance I am not led astray by passion, the introduction, the *sortie*, *Norma's cavatina*, the duet of the two women, with the trio that follows, and then the other duet of the women and the whole of the second act, which begins with the war hymn, are pieces of music of a kind which pleases me so well (modestly) that I confess I shall be glad if throughout my artistic career I am able to compose the like! *Basta!!!* of theatrical works the Public is Judge Supreme. Nevertheless, I rely on appealing against its sentence in this particular instance; and if at last it owns it was in the wrong I shall have won my suit, and I shall proclaim *Norma* to be my best opera. If not, I must resign myself to my sad fate; and by way of consolation I shall say: Did not the Romans hiss the *Olympiade* of the divine Pergolèse? I leave by the mail, and I hope to reach Naples ere this is in your hands. But one or the other—either I or the letter—will make you aware of the melancholy fate of *Norma* hissed! Don't worry yourself too much about it, my good Florimo; I am young, and I feel within me the power to revenge this terrible disaster. Read this letter to all our friends; I like the truth to be known as well in bad as in good fortune. Farewell; we shall soon meet. Till then take a kiss from your affectionate

"BELLINI."

Norma was always Bellini's favourite amongst his own compositions. Once, when asked which of his works he should save first if they were imperilled by shipwreck, he answered without hesitation, "Ah! my dear *Norma*!" No wonder, therefore, that we should hear of his weeping bitterly over its failure. But the Milanese set about reversing their judgment even sooner than he had hoped. The opera ran forty nights with increasing success, the tidings of which must have rejoiced Bellini when they reached him in Catania, whither he had

gone directly after its unlucky *première*. His native place received him with inconceivable enthusiasm : the whole town turned out to meet him on his arrival, and the shopkeepers refused to take any money for what he purchased. But neither the sunshine of Sicily nor of Fortune could chase away the melancholy that haunted his smile and oppressed his spirit ; he felt a strong presentiment that all things were drawing to a close for him, and as he left the island and saw the great grey mountain emitting volleys of smoke and flame he cried, "And thou also, Etna, thou also art fain to give me one last farewell !" Soon was he fated to pass from off the world's stage—

Like some frail exhalation which the dawn
Robes in its golden light.

Soon was he to take that last journey from the bare idea of which he recoiled as a child recoils from darkness. "Is it not a horrible thing to think of," he said, when the end was near, "that the most beloved of men leaves behind him but a faint trace, often almost effaced, sometimes wholly forgotten ? Look at me, for instance, surrounded by true and affectionate friends. Had I just quitted this world, they would go on their way, light-hearted as before, giving not a thought to me, and perhaps one day would hear my music without even saying, 'Poor Bellini !'"

Thus the mind wanders from the glory of his early triumphs at La Scala, the memory of which he ever cherished as the most precious thing he possessed, to the silence of his foreign grave, where he lies in good company, beside Cherubini and Chopin, and where the writer of these lines well remembers standing when a child, and thinking that this quiet corner in the Père la Chaise was the spot best worth a visit amid all the splendours of Imperial Paris.

A couple of years after the first performance of *Norma* it was revived, under circumstances of peculiar interest, for the *début* of Maria Malibran in the Scala theatre. The Milanese were determined to have her, but for some reason—very likely a monetary consideration—the impresario (the Duke Visconti di Modrone) was loth to further their wishes. However, the good people of Milan led him no pleasant life whilst his obstinacy held out : they hissed whenever they caught a glimpse of him in his box at La Scala ; and, worse still, they actually made arrangements for starting a rival opera company for the sole purpose of ensuring the services of Malibran for the ensuing season. Agents were despatched to negotiate with the *cantatrices* ; but the Duke got wind of it, and with all speed sent off two of his own emissaries, who managed to outrun the others and obtained the prize. The Duke had now thoroughly learnt his lesson ; he agreed to give Malibran the sum of 450,000 frs. for 185 performances in the seasons of 1835-6-7, with the addition of free benefits, board and lodging in a palace, horses, &c., while she stayed in Milan.

One clique of the Milanese public, which formerly had shown such small appreciation either of opera or performance, professed itself terribly scandalized at Malibran's selection of "Pasta's part" for her first appearance. Between the two great artists themselves there existed no particle of jealousy; Malibran, in fact, did not believe it possible that *Norma*, played by Pasta, could ever have failed to make a deep impression, as we know that it did when first produced in Milan. A little later than the time of which we are now writing she witnessed Pasta's *Norma* in Bologna, and came away declaring that "she was more than ever convinced that the report current in Milan of this opera having been unsuccessful, was totally false." On the same occasion Pasta cordially thanked Malibran for consenting to sing before her fellow-citizens in Milan. But this personal goodwill weighed nothing in the counsels of the "Pastists," who caused poor Maria not a little anxiety until the "first night" came off. Whilst preparing in her dressing-room for the first performance she was quite overcome with tears. The house was crammed; the pit had been crowded since early in the afternoon; the "Pastists" had artfully distributed their contingent over different parts of the theatre. No sooner, however, had Malibran sung the opening bars of "Casta Diva" than all their venom vanished, and they could but join in the thundering plaudits which made the performance one continued triumph, almost unprecedented, even in La Scala.

Malibran stayed a few more happy days in Milan, her greatest amusement being the puppet Teatro Girolamo, where she spent every moment she could spare. The sculptor Valerio Nesti struck a medal bearing her image, encircled in the words, "Maria Felicitas Garcia Malibran;" and on the reverse, "Per universale consenso proclamata mirabile nell'azione e nel canto. Milano. MDCCCXXXIV." On the 14th October, her last appearance that season, the stage became a garden of bouquets and a shower of trinkets (!), and poetic effusions descended from every side. At the conclusion she was recalled thirty times. So intense was the excitement that the police got frightened, and ordered the audience to disperse. When Malibran drove back to the Palazzo Visconti she found a triumphal arch run up in her honour, the gardens glistening with many-coloured lamps, and the chorus and orchestra of La Scala drawn up to perform a festal ode. Twenty thousand persons were assembled to bid her farewell.

Malibran's final representations in Milan took place during the carnival season of 1836. One of her very last appearances was in Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda*, in which she uttered certain passages of a political import with a warmth and emphasis that created a tremendous sensation and resulted in the suppression of the opera after two or three nights. She had been at Milan when the news came of Bellini's death, and on the impulse of the moment had started a fund for the purpose of raising a tribute to his memory, putting her own name down for a liberal subscription. One year later, September 23, 1836, the exact anniversary of

the death of the composer of *La Sonnambula*, Maria Malibran, whose most peerless assumption was perhaps that of the heroine of this opera, breathed her last in smoky Manchester. Hers is typically the story of the lyrical or dramatic artist. Greeted like a conqueror half over two continents, delighting unnumbered thousands and receiving all that ephemeral fame has to give, she fell meteor-like, at the acme of her career, and left behind—what? De Musset's touching lines give the answer :

Une croix ! et l'oubli, la nuit et le silence !
 Ecoutez ! c'est le vent, c'est l'océan immense ;
 C'est un pêcheur qui chante au bord du grand chemin.
 Et de tant de beauté, de gloire et d'espérance,
 De tant d'accords si doux d'un instrument divin,
 Pas un faible soupir, pas un écho lointain.

After all, such a lot is not a sad one ; it is an old saying and a true one that no man can possess everything in this world—"nor woman neither"—and perishable roses are fairer than everlasting flowers.

With the name of Malibran closes the period in the history of La Scala during which its managers were able as a rule to command the services of artists of European reputation. After 1836 the increasing demands of great artists and the furious competition of the opera-houses of Paris, London, and St. Petersburg, made it necessary, with few exceptions, for the Milanese to content themselves with the performances of singers of lesser fame. But when we cast a retrospective glance over the twenty years preceding this date, we cannot but be struck by the galaxy of famous names which meets our eyes. Season after season Pasta, Grisi, Rubini, Tamburini, and Lablache appeared before the audience of La Scala. Lablache came to Milan from Sicily in 1820, bringing with him what was already no mean reputation. He made his *début* at La Scala in *La Cenerentola* ; in 1821 *Mercadante* wrote for him the rôle of the father in his *chef-d'œuvre*, *Elisa e Claudio* ; and in 1832 Meyerbeer made his acquaintance and requested him to sing in his new opera, *L'Esule di Granata*. During his earlier visits to Milan Lablache came in contact with a superannuated buffo named Raffanelli, an excellent singer, who in his youth had formed part of the celebrated Italian troupe which made so much sensation in Paris in 1789, and who was now occupying the humble position of cashier to the Scala Theatre. It was from this man that he learnt the secret of that exquisite and delicate distinction in the manner of rendering the music of different schools and epochs, for which he was afterwards justly extolled. Raffanelli posted himself in an obscure box while the general rehearsals were proceeding, and made his remarks upon Lablache's acting, diction, and vocalisation, which were modified, amplified, or corrected on the following day in accordance with the tenor of the veteran's observations. It testifies much to Lablache's intelligence and modesty that he was willing to be schooled and tutored by the old ex-buffo, and it is certain that his admirable style was largely attributable to the lessons thus received.

La Scala seems to have been the first important opera-house at which Rubini appeared. There is a curious anecdote, and one illustrating the cost at which those surprising high notes, always so dear to the public, are sometimes produced, in relation to his connection with this theatre. Pacini's opera, *Il Talismano*, was put upon the stage during the spring season of 1829, and Rubini, as the hero, made his entry with a recitative in which a phrase occurred where the high B flat was suddenly attacked and sustained, to the enormous delight of the audience, who invariably made the house resound with cries of "Un'altra volta! un'altra volta!" Seven times was the B flat given and repeated with success; but on the eighth evening, when the great tenor came forward, and, casting up his eyes, drew a long breath preparatory to striking the note, not a sound followed!—his voice had failed him. The audience encouraged him with sympathetic cheers to a second attempt, and, making a tremendous muscular effort, he threw out a blast clear and pure as ever was silver trumpet. The public enthusiasm knew no bounds; but, in the moment of the exertion, the singer had experienced the sensation of something violently snapping in his chest; and when the scene was over—for, borne up by excitement, he went through it as though nothing had happened—he sent for the surgeon of the theatre, who discovered that he had broken his clavicle. He asked how long it would take to mend, to which the surgeon replied, two months of perfect repose. Rubini stoutly declared that he could not break his engagement, and it was at length agreed that he should keep quiet in the day but continue to sing at night. Many years after, when he had retired from the stage, though his voice was still so beautiful that those who heard it asserted there was nothing to be compared to it, Rubini returned to Milan; and his portly figure and red silk handkerchief were for a long time conspicuous features in the Scala pit. He would attend almost every performance, listening with marked attention to the music and uttering an indignant "hush" when, to obtain a hearing, any poor artist had to carry on an unequal struggle with the din of conversation.

Milan is associated with the youth of the two latest famous Italian composers no less than with that of their predecessors. Here Donizetti produced *Anna Bolena*, his thirty-second opera, but the first which stamped him as an original master. There is no record of this event either in the archives of La Scala or in those of the Teatro della Canobbiana, and we therefore conclude the work was written for the Carcano theatre, temporarily converted into an opera-house. In 1832 his *L'Elisir d'Amore* was brought out at the Canobbiana, and in 1834 *Lucrezia Borgia* was produced at the Scala—the former with great, the latter with no very signal success. Of Verdi the story is told that he was sent to the Milanese Conservatoire in 1833 by a lawyer of the name of Antonio Barezzi, who had detected in him the germs of genius whilst he was yet working as a lad in his father's mill in the Parmese village of Busseto. The professional authorities, less discriminating,

either refused to admit him because to their minds his appearance denoted the reverse of a musical organisation, or dismissed him, after a brief trial, owing to his displaying "a total want of musical talent." On this point accounts differ. Anyhow, Verdi was faithful to the *ars divina*, discouragements notwithstanding. Turned away from the Conservatoire, he sought the tuition of one Lavigna, *maestro del cembalo* at the Scala. Lavigna's system of instruction consisted in setting his pupils to write pieces as best they could for his subsequent correction; the method was simple, but, to judge by the results, effective. With him Verdi remained for several years. It is said that when, in 1842, the young composer offered his *Nabuco* to the directors of La Scala, his old patron the lawyer again came to his aid, and, by dint of expending considerable sums in caution-money, induced the not too willing impresario to accept the work. It proved an unequivocal success, and made the reputation of Verdi, who was thirty times summoned to the foot-lights, where he stood in threadbare coat and much worn boots, with his eyes irresistibly fixed upon the box which contained a certain delighted old miller from Busseto.

We have thus briefly sketched some of those scenes, notable in Art history, which flit before the mind of the musical amateur when he takes his place in the great theatre of Milan. But the Scala is suggestive of memories yet more stirring than the triumphs of its stage. To do honour to what a strange medley of kings and governments has it not been lit a *giorno*, and crowded with starred and diamond-bedecked multitudes!—fêtes of the Cisalpine Republic, fêtes of the Austro-Russian victories, fêtes of the Peace of Luneville; gala performances for Prince Eugène Beauharnais and his Bavarian bride, for "His Majesty the Emperor and King, Napoleon," for the return of the National Army. Once more, representations "By Command" of Austrian Archdukes and Viceroyalty—down to the days of wild exultation, when people were still full of faith in Imperial promises, and when the King of Sardinia and he whom he called his "magnanimous ally" graced the Scala with their presence on the morrow of Magenta. Another visit of the King in the August of the same year; visits also of the Tuscan and Æmilian deputations, which came in bearing their adherence to the nation's unity; then a performance on behalf of the exodus of patriotic Venetians; again, one of welcome to the National Guard of liberated Naples; and, in October, 1870, the reception of the Roman deputation and the celebration of the crowning of the national edifice. Latest of all, the other day, another Emperor to be entertained—quite a different one to the last or those who went before him; an Emperor come across the Alps neither for battle nor penance, but just to stand here father-like beside Italy's future Queen, and bow low his hoary head to a throng of free Italian men and women. Wonderful the fated march of events which has made this Hohenzollern prince the fulfiller of Dante's prophecy—the Imperial *Dux* from the North, who

with one swift strong blow sweeps over the temporal Popedom and its Gallic prop.

Non sarà tutto tempo senza reda
L'Aguglia
. un cinquecento dieci e cinque
Messo di Dio, anciderà la fuja
E quel gigante che con lei delinque.

Surely it seems, as we go through the annals of La Scala, that we see rising before us the whole drama, stranger, more impossible than any fiction that has been enacted in these our times, in what the first Napoleon was wont to speak of as "ce beau théâtre de l'Italie." And now that we have wandered into politics, it may be as well to say a word in regard to the underlying significance of those outbursts of enthusiasm, those unexampled operatic triumphs, of which La Scala was the scene during the darkest days of alien subjugation. How could a people bent beneath a foreign yoke find heart to rejoice even in the sweetest melodies of Rossini or at Rubini's most honied notes? A great poet, a German, touched upon this point, hard upon fifty years ago, with that luminous insight that makes us sometimes doubt if poets are not after all the wise men of the earth, and we, the votaries of prose and common sense, be not the fools and blind—if it is not they who see realities and we visions. He says—whether the story was *vero* or *ben trovato* is not material—but he says: "One of my Britons regarded the Italians as being politically indifferent, because they seemed to listen with equanimity, when we strangers chatted on the Catholic Emancipation and the Turkish War; and he was unjust enough to say as much, mockingly, to a pale Italian with a jet-black beard. We had the previous evening seen the *début* of a new opera in *La Scala*, and witnessed the tremendous enthusiasm which a first success excites. 'You Italians,' said the Englishman, 'appear to be dead to everything save music, which is the only thing which seems to excite you.' 'You do us injustice,' said the pale one, shrugging his shoulders. 'Ah!' sighed he, 'Italy sits elegiacally dreaming on her ruins, and when she is at times suddenly awakened by the melody of a song and springs wildly up, this sudden inspiration is not due to the song itself, but rather to the ancient memories and feelings which the song has awakened—which Italy has ever borne in her heart, and which now mightily gush forth—and this is the meaning of the wild tumult which you have heard in *La Scala*.'"

Heinrich Heine wrote thus in 1823. It is so true that not a word can be now added to it or taken from it. The soul of Italy, gagged in speech, found utterance in song; and thus the golden period of Italian opera comes to have a connection with subsequent events little suspected by those who deem man's spirit a thing made up of nicely docketed pigeon-holes and fail to see that life is one, whether its manifestations be art, literature, politics, or religion.

Humour.

A FASHION has sprung up of late years of regarding the sense of humour as one of the cardinal virtues. It naturally follows that everybody supposes that he possesses the quality himself, and that his neighbours do not. It is indeed rarer to meet man, woman, or child who will confess to any deficiency in humour than to a want of logic. Many people will confess that they are indolent, superstitious, unjust, fond of money, of good living, or of flattery: women will make a boast of cowardice and men of coarseness; but nobody ever admits that he or she can't see a joke or take an argument. If people were to be taken at their own valuation, logical acumen and a keen perception of the humorous would be the two most universal qualities in the world. Nothing, on the other hand, is more common than the most sweeping condemnation of other men or races. It wants a surgical operation, says the familiar phrase, to get a joke into the head of a Scotchman. The French, says the ordinary Briton, have no sense of humour; the Germans are too elephantine, too metaphysical, too sentimental, or too what you will, to perceive humour; the Irish are witty, if you please, but wit is the antithesis of humour; the Americans have a kind of cynical irony which with them passes for humour, but it has not the true kindly genial flavour of the English article; and even amongst this favoured race how many possess the genuine faculty? All women notoriously hate humour; and the audience of the true humorist is limited even amongst males. Every humorist—except the sacred exceptions—is called a cynic. He disgusts three hearers for one whom he pleases. If you doubt it, try the ironical method with a popular audience or in a newspaper article. You will soon discover that the lady who was seriously shocked when Sydney Smith proposed to take off his flesh and sit in his bones, or the Irish bishop who thought some statements in "Gulliver" incredible, possessed about the average sensibility. The most dangerous of all figures of speech is the ironical. Half your hearers think that you are laughing at virtue, and the other half have a puzzled impression that you are laughing at themselves. If you would succeed with a large audience, you may be dull, or bombastic, or sentimental, or flimsy, or muddled: but a touch of humour is the one deadly sin. And yet, we all swear that we love humour above all things. We enjoy Shakespeare's humour; but he has been dead a long time, and the bravest of men does not dare to say what he really thinks about the national poet; we are fond of Charles Lamb, but Lamb's writings were caviare to the

public whilst he lived, and only made their way by slow degrees and the efforts of a select circle of admirers; we read Mark Twain and Artemus Ward, and perhaps to a calm observer that is the most conclusive proof of all that we have very little notion of what true humour means.

And yet everybody has shrunk like a coward at one time or other from the awful imputation—You have no sense of humour. This phrase has become a common-place: it is a kind of threat held *in terrorem* over the head of everybody who dares to differ from any accepted opinion. As soon as we see the remark coming, we cower and tremble; we force ourselves into the outward and visible signs of enjoyment; we are as much ashamed of ourselves as a young gentleman convicted of not knowing the difference between Madeira and Marsala; we feel as if we had been guilty of a breach of good manners. An absence of this peculiar taste is taken to be one of those congenital weaknesses which are not precisely vices, but which we are nevertheless more anxious to conceal than if they were actually immoral. For a good deal of this weakness I believe that we must blame the one great British humorist who still survives, I mean Mr. Carlyle. His humour is so genuine and keen and his personality so vigorous that he has fairly bullied us into accepting this view of the immeasurable value of humour in the world. We have not yet all admitted the doctrine of hero-worship; but we feel that the man without humour is more decidedly unpardonable than the valet who does not appreciate his master's humour. To say anything against humour considered as an intellectual virtue, is therefore to oppose the overwhelming current of avowed opinion. But I have a strong suspicion that many persons will be secretly grateful for any protest against the creed thus forced upon them at the point of the bayonet, as a race of contented slaves is sometimes found to cherish a widely-spread feeling of revolt. The undertaking is the more promising because one may safely say that there has never been a period at which the quality most antithetic to humour—priggishness in all its forms and varieties, a sublime solemnity in uttering platitudes, a profound conviction that all the wisdom of the world is concentrated in a petty clique, a devoted belief that A or B has found out the very last word of historical or poetical or scientific dogma—flourished more vigorously. One often reads books of which the very existence seems to be incompatible with the contemporary existence of any one who can see a joke or laugh at a pompous humbug.

What is humour? That is one of the insoluble questions. Psychologists write about it, but not very successfully. Perhaps it is because no great philosopher was ever himself a humorist. Can any one imagine Kant, or Hegel, or Aristotle, or Descartes, or Coleridge, or Hume, or Mr. Mill, or Sir W. Hamilton really enjoying a bit of Aristophanes, or Swift, or Rabelais? The thinker loves symmetry, the humorist hates it; and therefore the two classes are radically opposed; which, one may

suppose, is one argument against the merits of humour. As philosophers have not succeeded in defining the quality, we need not seek to supply their place. One fact, however, will be admitted. Humour implies a keen delight in emotional contrasts. Wit, say the best observers, differs from humour in that wit is purely intellectual, whilst humour implies an admixture of sentiment. Witticisms are the electric sparks that flash out when some circuit of reasoning is unexpectedly completed; humour is the discharge which takes place when two currents of feeling, differing in temperature, are delicately blended. The humorist is the man who laughs through tears. In the fabric of his emotions the warp of melancholy is crossed by the woof of cheerfulness. (I am not acquainted with warps and woofs in common life, but they are mentioned in Gray's Ode, and seem to be specially intended for literary use.) His writing is a play of cross lights, sunshine, and shadow dexterously intermingled or completely fused into a contradictory unity. He laughs in the midst of a prayer and is yet not consciously irreverent; in the very innermost mental recesses, consecrated to his deepest emotions, there are quaint grotesques and images due to the freaks of the wildest fancy; the temple in which he worships is partly an old-curiosity shop; he belongs to the sect which keeps monkeys in its sacred places. You cannot tell whether a cathedral will most affect him with an awe of the infinite or an exhibition of tumblers at a pantomime. He will even laugh at the Social Science Association. He specially hates a downright statement, true as Euclid, or solid as Adam Smith; and thinks that all scientific truth is as wearisome to the mind as a steel cuirass to the body. There is no way of twisting it into queer shapes. His logic is founded upon the axiom that of two contradictory propositions both must be true. He starts from the assumption that A is not A. And, above all, the humorist must also be an egotist. The oddities of his own character give him the utmost delight. He cherishes his whims and the arbitrary twists of his moral nature, for fear that he should lapse into straightforward simplicity of sentiment. All humour is in a sense dramatic. Every humorous sentiment is the embodiment of some special idiosyncrasy, or it would become commonplace. There have been modest humorists; nay, a humorist is invariably modest in one sense, for it is his cue to laugh at all vanity as at all uncompounded emotion. Conceit implies that the world is worth taking seriously and ought to take me seriously. The most rooted conviction of the humorist is that the world is a farce—a melancholy farce, indeed, for otherwise there would be no contradiction—but a farce where the sublime must never be separated from its shadow, the ridiculous. His very egotism, in short, is itself a contradiction. It implies the two beliefs that his personality is intensely interesting and yet intensely absurd. It is the egotism of Lamb or of Montaigne, who are always dwelling fondly on their own tastes and associations and biographical reminiscences, and yet quietly railing at that very fondness. Modest

vanity, humble self-assertion, display of their own peculiarities as at once the most absorbing and the most trifling of all topics of thought, is of the very essence of the genuine humorist; and yet the most dogged of political economists will be offended if you tell him he cannot relish humour!

Humour, therefore—the inference is surely irresistible—is a morbid secretion. If women and children do not appreciate humour, it is because the best part of creation is the simplest in its tastes. If Frenchmen have ceased to be humorous since Rabelais and Montaigne, it is because they are the keenest of logicians. If Germans are not humorous, it is because they love sentiment too heartily to laugh at it. If the Scotch are not humorous, it is because the Puritan conception of the world realises the solemnity of life, and scorns all trifling with its awful realities. As humour is complex, the humorist is the product of conflicting forces; an occasional freak of nature, to be valued only by those who prefer oddity to beauty—a hundred-limbed Hindoo idol to a Greek statue. Had Sophocles, or Phidias, or Raphael, or Dante, or Milton, a sense of humour? Do you find humour in Thomas à Kempis, or in the Hebrew prophets? A loving apologist of the *Biglow Papers* has tried to defend his client from a foolish charge of profanity by discovering some touches of humour in Isaiah—as some one once associated dry humour with the Athanasian Creed. Everything is fair in apologetic writing, as in love and war. A passing gleam of irony may tinge some Scriptural denunciations of idolatrous folly just enough to excuse an apologist driven to his wits' end for an argument; but there is not enough to excuse anybody else. The spirit of humour—the mocking goblin who sits at the elbow of some men to chill enthusiasm, to prick all the bubbles of the ideal with the needle-point of prosaic fact, to give imagination the lie, like the soul in Raleigh's verses, to tell eloquence that it is bombast, and poetry that it is unreal, belongs to the lower earth. His master or his servant—for the familiar sprite is both ruler and slave to the wizard—is tethered to the ground and can never soar without danger of a sudden collapse. And, therefore, like other spirits of the earth, he rules by our baser instincts, and his rule is but for a time. How much of all that passes for humorous is simply profane, or indecent, or brutal? Half the humorous stories that pass current in the world are unfit for publication. The great humorists, from Rabelais to Swift or Sterne, are no longer quotable in their naked reality; and as the world becomes more decorous humour becomes tongue-tied and obsolete. Of the jests that survive, half, again, owe their merit to their inhumanity. Look at any of the current stories of Douglas Jerrold, who passed for a humorist in these later days. Every recorded jest of his that I have seen is a gross incivility made palatable by a pun. The substance of each phrase is, You are a fool; the art consists in so wrapping the insolence in a play of words that the hearers laugh, and the victim is deprived of sympathy. "It was your father, then, who was

not so handsome?" is one of Talleyrand's brilliant retorts to a man who spoke of his mother's beauty. What is this but to say "You are an ugly beast," and yet to evade the legitimate resentment of the sufferer? If the poor wretch had some harmless vanity, and fancied that some reflection of a mother's beauty still lingered upon his misshapen features, would any man of decent kindheartedness tear away this poor little salve to self-esteem for the sake of a laugh? *Diseur de bons mots mauvais caractère*, says Pascal: and he never said a truer thing. If humour implies the love of emotional contrasts, the most effective contrasts can be attained by confronting reverence, or kindliness, or the love of purity, with the coarse, the brutal, or the profane; and few are the humorists who can resist the temptation to use such weapons. The goblin who uses this base weapon is also, in his nature, mortal. Beauty is eternal and the grotesque temporary. The queer contrast ceases to amuse when a new order has swept away accidental associations of ideas. Only some inveterate scholar can really laugh now at a classical joke. Even a schoolboy or a superficial reader can recognise the exquisite art of Horace, or the grandeur of Æschylus, or the eternal freshness of Homer. But can they really laugh even over Aristophanes or Lucian? Do they not rather painfully discover by logical inference that there was once a pungent essence in the verbal framework which is now so elaborately pointless? We may come nearer to our own days. Read an Elizabethan jest-book. Study the humour of Ben Jonson. Nay, read Shakspeare honestly and analyse your emotions. Is Nym's repetition of his cant-phrase very laughter-stirring? Does Mrs. Quickly stir the midriff like Mrs. Gamp? Can you not read Falstaff's story of the men in buckram without bringing tears into your eyes? Rabelais is a great name. Can anybody deliberately sit down and laugh "over a jolly chapter of Rabelais" unless he has laboriously qualified himself for the purpose? I confess that for mere purposes of amusement I would rather study St. Thomas Aquinas, though I admit that Rabelais may be valuable in an antiquarian sense. Or to come nearer to our own day: take Fielding or Smollett, from both of whom (though Fielding, be it said in passing, was worth a dozen Smolledds) two or three generations of readers sucked inexpressible delight. Does it not seem to a modern reader as if some non-conducting medium were interposing itself between him and them? The polish is dimmed by the gathering mist. The voice has a dull far-away sound, as though the speaker were receding into some distant dreamland, not continuous with this solid earth. Of course this is partly true of all writing; or men would not, as they do, prefer a third-rate novel of to-day to the greatest books of the past; but the laughter-moving element in any book is that which is least stable. It is a colour which fades as it comes from the brush.

The answer is, of course, obvious—there is an obvious answer to everything. The buffoonery, it is replied, becomes stale; the genuine humour, of which buffoonery is but the coarse outward manifestation,

remains and is imperishable. Falstaff's men in buckram are dull enough; but the character of Falstaff is immortal. The humour of Cervantes is as little likely to perish as the intense imagination of Dante. Much humour is coarse and brutal. The humour of a fine nature is but the most delicate expression of exquisite tenderness, from which no beauty can be hidden by its external husk, however grotesque and ugly. The true humorist dwells upon the contrasts of life, upon the strange mixtures of the earthly and heavenly in all concrete beings, to teach us the most important of lessons. He shows us that the beggar may be a hero in disguise, not that the hero is a humbug. Rather, we should say, the humorist, *qua* humorist, is equally ready for either duty. Goldsmith's Vicar helps us to recognise simplicity and loving-kindness in the shabbiest of disguises. Swift, in his worst moments, would persuade us that all the fame of statesmen and soldiers is won by cowardice, avarice, and pettifogging corruption. Humour, by its nature, must be a double-edged weapon. It may poison our enthusiasm or check our contempt. Even when it dwells upon the simple virtues of a Vicar of Wakefield, it would not for the world lose sight of his foibles. So soon as the good man had an adequate income, or became capable of seeing through the tricks of a knave, he would cease to be interesting. And yet it is surely not right to respect humanity precisely in so far as it is coupled with impecuniosity and practical imbecility; and to esteem a good man heartily only so long as we can retain the belief that we are superior to his weaknesses. This way of patronising the Christian virtues has something suspicious about it. The humorist who delights in your beautiful characters, so long as they are rather ridiculous, fails to care for them when they insist upon taking things seriously. The generation who were charmed by the Vicar could never mock savagely enough at a Wesley or a Whitfield. Christianity was a charming object so long as it only led to a little quiet eccentricity. It was a foible to be petted and fondled. When it took to a serious attack upon acknowledged evils, the humorists changed their tactics and insisted upon the ugliness much more than upon the beauty. Is it not equally true now? The humorist loves the kind of virtuous character who can be made into a pretty plaything; he will melt into tears over the semi-idiotic organist in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, or any sentimental moralist who corrupts the poor by promiscuous charity, and curses the very name of Malthus. But let your benevolence be something more than a foible; an active, vigorous principle which tries, as clumsily and awkwardly and mistakenly as you please, really to knock some evil on the head; and then your humorist cannot find variations enough upon the old cry of hypocrite, humbug, impostor. How have humorists treated Lord Shaftesbury, for example? The Puritans, we are told, put down the old English drama; and people who think, as Charles Lamb apparently thought, that the main object of human existence was to write and see good plays, naturally inferred that the Puritans were a simple nuisance. As a matter of fact, the old English

drama, like all other things, was put down because it put itself down. It had become intolerably corrupt, and went the way of all flesh. But the contrast between the two forces is typical. The dramatists represent the sense of humour ; the laughing, mocking spirit which delights in contrast, and piques itself on never overlooking the sunny side of things. They had incomparably the best of the joke. The snivelling, canting, whining rogues were ridiculed with admirable spirit. The Puritans, however, had the best of it in the long run ; for Puritanism represents the conviction that, on the whole, the world is anything but a joke ; and that a manly spirit will sometimes have to take it in the most grim and serious earnest. The conflict has gone on ever since, and will probably go on in one shape or another for some time to come. The humour, indeed, is not all on one side. The greatest of modern humorists is also the most thorough Puritan. The strongest perception of the serious issues which underlie our frivolous lives, the profoundest sense of the infinities which surround our petty world, may express itself in an irony more trenchant than solemn denunciation. Human nature is too oddly mixed to allow of such sharp divisions being perfectly accurate ; and, having already renounced the attempt to define humour, I admit some thinkers who may fairly be called humorous are in alliance with the cause to which humorists, as such, are naturally opposed. Nor, again, do I wish to deny that as there is a time for everything, so there is a time for jesting, and, within proper limits, a time even for the Elizabethan drama. Shakspeare was a good writer ; and one or two of his successors deserve some of the things that have been said about them.

Why, if this be true, is humour so highly valued ? Our answer is easy. One of the best things that Pope ever said, and he has said more things deserving to be so called than perhaps any other writer, was that

Gentle dulness ever loves a joke.

I am almost daily reminded of the truth of this saying ; I doubt not that it will be illustrated afresh for anybody who cares to defend my positions. He will find that the most vigorous defenders of a sense of humour will be precisely the people who are most incapable of humorous perception. I never, for example, knew a person thoroughly deaf to humour who did not worship Miss Austen, or, when her writings were assailed, defend themselves by saying that the assailant had no sense of humour. Miss Austen, in fact, seems to be the very type of that kind of humour which charms one large class of amiable persons ; and Austenolatry is perhaps the most intolerant and dogmatic of literary creeds. To deny Miss Austen's marvellous literary skill would be simply to convict oneself of the grossest stupidity. It is probable, however, that as much skill may have been employed in painting a bit of old china as in one of Raphael's masterpieces. We do not therefore say that it possesses equal merit. And, on the same principle, allowing all possible praise to Miss Austen within her own sphere, I should dispute the conclusion that she was therefore entitled to be ranked with the great authors who have

sounded the depths of human passion, or found symbols for the finest speculations of the human intellect, instead of amusing themselves with the humours of a country tea-table. Comparative failure in the highest effects is more creditable than complete success in the lower. Now the popularity of Miss Austen with non-humorous persons (I should expressly admit, to avoid any false interpretation, that she is also popular with some humorists) shows what it is which mankind really understand by humour. They are really shocked by its more powerful manifestations. They call it cynicism. They like Dickens, who was beyond all doubt a true humorist, because he was not a thoroughgoing humorist; because he could drop his humour and become purely and simply maudlin at a moment's notice: that is to say, precisely because of the qualities which offend the more refined judges and the truest humorists. They like Miss Austen, on a similar ground, because her humour (to use a vulgar, but the only phrase) is drawn so excessively mild. There is not only nothing improper in her books, nothing which could prevent them from being given by a clergyman to his daughter as a birthday present; but there is not a single flash of biting satire. She is absolutely at peace with her most comfortable world. She never even hints at a suspicion that squires and parsons of the English type are not an essential part of the order of things; if she touches upon poverty, the only reflection suggested is one of gentle scorn for people who can't keep a butler themselves or take tea with people who do so. When the amiable Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* finds that her mother has to eat cold mutton and mend the children's clothes, her only thought is to return to her rich uncle. The harsh hideous facts with which ninety-nine out of a hundred of our fellow-creatures are constantly struggling, are never admitted into this delightful world of well-warmed country-houses. Humour of the gentle variety which charms us in Miss Austen, or the humour of Addison's Knight, or of Goldsmith's Vicar, is indeed charming in its way and may well be popular. It is but the gentle smile with which an amiable character disarms our jealousy of virtue. You may really admire my Christian charity, it seems to say, without grudging, for I wear coarse stockings and commit half-a-dozen harmless solecisms of manner. You need not be afraid that I shall call upon you to be heroic, or invite your attention to the seamy side of the world. All the evils to which flesh is heir can be sufficiently cured by the milk of human kindness. Sentimentality that won't make you cry, sympathy that will never become painful, quick observation that will never ask really awkward questions, these are sufficient weapons wherewith to conquer this hard world. A gentle optimism is the most popular of creeds, for we all want some excuse for turning away our eyes from certain facts. And optimism put so gracefully and deferentially is fascinating within its sphere. Life becomes an idyl with just enough spice of latent satire to prevent it from becoming insipid. Let us all drink plenty of milk-punch and forget the laws of Political Economy, seems to be the moral of Dickens's *Christmas Carols*; and in

a less boisterous form, fitted to feebler animal spirits, that seems to be the substantial creed of the gentler variety of humorist.

There is a time for such moods : and they have been interpreted with infinite grace and delicacy by some of the writers noticed ; but between such humour and the humour of Swift or Fielding there is a whole world of difference. The mocking goblin has been put into livery, and can wait gracefully at a tea-table or become a pleasant assistant in a library. The " Berserker " spirit, which some critics find to be the essential element of English literature, is thoroughly quenched within him. No thought of revolting against the world, of outraging its decencies, flying in the face of its conventionalities, and pouring ridicule on its holiest creeds, is encouraged by him more than by a thorough English governess. Delight in such humour may therefore be comparable with dislike to humour in its most genuine forms. And consequently, humour of the old savage kind is pretty well obsolete. A wretched caricature of it exists in what is called American humour. The trick has become so stale that one may hope that it too will speedily expire. The whole art consists in speaking of something hideous in a tone of levity. Learn to make a feeble joke about murder and sudden death and you are qualified to set up as a true humorist. Learn the ordinary newspaper English, and apply it to some horrors where it is manifestly out of place, and you can thenceforward make jokes by machinery. The true humorist might be brutal, but he had real intensity of feeling. When Swift discussed the propriety of converting Irish babies into an article of food, he went beyond all permissible limits and even defeated his own satirical aim by the coarseness of his images ; but at least he showed concentrated wrath and righteous indignation. When the same method is applied by writers who really aim only at producing a grin, it rapidly becomes disgusting. The popularity of the sham article shows that our taste for the genuine has grown weak.

Is this a good thing ? Does it show that we have become squeamish or tender-hearted ? Are our nerves too weak for the old horseplay of our forefathers, or do we take too solemn a view of life to bear such trifling ? These are questions not to be easily decided ; and yet one must admit that when the historian of English æsthetic literature in the nineteenth century arises, there is one quality which he will certainly not find in excess. It may be tender, delicate, graceful, or anything you please ; but nobody will ever call it manly. The general want of vigour is perhaps after all at the bottom of the deficiency in good hearty reckless humour ; and therefore much as we may rejoice at the absence of some of its worst manifestations, I fear we shall not be able to congratulate ourselves unreservedly when we have reached the consummation to which we seem to be so rapidly tending, and can declare that the humorist has been finally banished from our literature.

An Artist's Life in the Fifteenth Century.

[FROM RECENTLY DISCOVERED DOCUMENTS.]

It seems as if, with the hero-worship which makes us delight to honour the great deeds of great men, were intimately mingled—even as the warp with the woof of some woven stuff—another tendency, namely, the desire to gain a familiar knowledge of those who have charmed our imaginations by genius, ennobled our hearts by goodness, or exalted our spirits by the brightness of their splendid fortunes. We love not only to behold these demi-gods at their ambrosial banquet among the shining summits, "*purpureo bibentes ore nectar*," but to share with them, as it were, the daily bread of humanity; to touch their hands, to see them live their household lives, and to enjoy with regard to them something of the feeling which inspired the well-known exclamation of the artist before a brother-artist's masterpiece, "*Anch' io son pittore*!" "I, too, am a man! And if my head be not crowned with your laurels, yet my heart beats as yours once beat, and I claim kinship with my great relations."

This sentiment, too, is the thread that strings together the centuries for us. What a strange cordial glow of pleasure it awakens to recognise across the lapse of three hundred years the household voices of husband and wife, child and parent, such as sound daily in our ears! The simplest and homeliest details about the generations who have passed across the theatre of this world before us have a subtle charm for most minds. The theme is old, but cannot become threadbare, any more than the turf that carpets our fields. Like the grass, it is perennially fresh; it grows, and is not made.

Thanks to the indefatigable and learned researches of Professor Adamo Rossi, Librarian of the Communal Library of Perugia, we are enabled to reconstruct with some vividness the history of a painter who, if he does not rank among the very greatest, was yet a man of mark in a period when the art of painting had almost reached its highest point of glory. For a long time the honour of having been Perugino's master was attributed to him; erroneously, however, as we shall see. And he is the only Folignese painter whom garrulous Giorgio Vasari condescends to mention. Pictures by his hand exist in many European galleries; but in every catalogue, guide-book, or art-history hitherto published, these works are attributed to "the Folignese painter, Niccolò Alunno," in accordance with the name bestowed upon him by Vasari, and confirmed later by the authority of Jacobilli, a native historian of Foligno. The world, however, has been mistaken all this time.

The real style and title of the so-called Niccolò Alunno runs thus : *Maestro Niccolò di Liberatore da Foligno* ; that is to say, Nicholas, son of Liberator of Foligno.

Surnames, at least for those of plebeian birth, were far from being in general use when Maestro Niccolò flourished. Many similar errors have been exposed by Professor Rossi's patient and intelligent labours. For example, the great Perugino, pride and glory of the Umbrian school, is written of by (I quote Professor Rossi's own phrase) "the servile herd of the erudite," as Pietro Vanucci, making Vanucci a family name. But the fact is that he was known to his contemporaries as "Pietro di Atto di Vanuccio, Perugino ;" in our vernacular, "Peter, son of Atto, son of Jack, the Perugian." Vanuccio was a diminutive formed from Giovanni—*Giovanuccio*. Even Raphael came by his surname, Sanzio, in the same fashion. He was Raffaello di Giovanni di Santi, da Urbino. Santi is to this day a common baptismal name in Italy, as offering a compendious form to express the holy patrons to whom the child at his christening is peculiarly dedicated, "*All-the-Saints !*" It reminds one a little of the parental solicitude of the kings and queens in the fairy tales, who invite *all* the fairies, *en masse*, to stand godmothers to their little prince or princess. However, to return to the realms of fact and documents, it should be known that until the young Raphael went to Rome he was destitute of a surname. There, some one of the classical cardinals who then frequented the Papal Court—the learned Pagan Bembo himself, may be!—doubtless conferred on the famous artist a family appellation by latinising his grandfather's simple name of Santi into Sanctius, which latter was easily corrupted by Italian tongues into Sanzio.

The history of the name of Alunno, conferred on Maestro Niccolò, is more singular. I will give it in Professor Rossi's own words, for to him is due the honour of having discovered it :—

"As it had never occurred to me to read the cognomen Alunno, either in any of the numerous works signed by Maestro Niccolò, or in any of the still more numerous public acts in which it was necessary that he should be fully and distinctly named, I set myself to find out how and whence Vasari had derived it ; and after a long search I believe I have discovered its origin in the following fact. There exists in the church of St. Nicholas at Foligno a picture representing, in the principal compartment, the birth of Christ, and containing in the other divisions various saints and angels. On the base of the picture are two angels supporting a scroll with an inscription, of which these are the four first lines :—

AD LECTOREM.

Nobile testata est pingi pia Brisida quondam

Hoc opus ; O ! nimium munera grata Deo.

Si petis auctoris nomen ; Nicholaus Alumnus

Fulginië : patrie pulcra corona sue (*sic*.)

"The writer of the epigram having to mention poetically the country of the painter, and not being able to employ the usual *Fulginas*, or *de Fulgineo*, uses a circumlocution; and to the third verse, 'Si petis auctoris nomen,' he elegantly replies:—

Nicholaus, alumnus
Fulginiae.

"I have called the phrase 'elegant,' and so I think it will be acknowledged to be by those who are familiar with the Latin poets, and who will recall the *Tyton terræ omniparentis alumnus* (son of the Earth) of Virgil (*Æn.* VI. 595), the *Bistonæ magnum alumnus* (the Thracian Orpheus) of Valerius Flaccus (*Argon.* III. 159), the *Vatinus Sutrinæ tabernæ alumnus* (brought up and educated in the taverns of Sutri) of Tacitus (*Annal.* XV. 34), the *Auruncea alumnus* (Lucilius, born in Aurunca Suessa) of Juvenal (*Sat.* I. 30), and, to come down to the Middle Ages, the *Umbrie alumnus* (Umbrian) of the epitaph in honour of a certain doctor Andrea, in the church of Santa Maria Nuova at Perugia. Now Vasari, or whosoever read the above-quoted epitaph for him, took no heed of the grammatical connection between the words *alumnus* and *Fulginiae*, gave to the first the value of a cognomen, and assumed the second to belong by syntax as well as prosody to the pentameter. Vasari's *Lives*, printed in 1550, that is to say, after even Maestro Niccolò's sons were dead, penetrated into Umbria in a period when there were but few readers who were interested in such subjects, and who consequently were able or willing to confute the errors of Vasari's book. The judgments, the dates, and the names in it were by the servile herd of the crudite accepted as oracles, and were repeated and taught to the people even although they were often in flat contradiction with local testimony and traditions. The Folignese Jacobilli—second to none of the learned crew, whether for absence of criterion or for facility and audacity in lying—not only accepted the false cognomen, but used it to create, for the greater glory of the painter and his birthplace, the patrician family *de Alumnis*! As was natural, the word pronounced by the Aretine biographer (Vasari) was echoed everywhere in Italy and out of Italy. . . . But in Foligno especially, where it was strengthened by the authority of the native historian, Jacobilli, it exercised, and continues to exercise, a species of fascination. The good folks of Foligno see the name *Alumnus* in every picture and document where *Nicolaus* is written; they are able to distinguish the individual so called by themselves from another Maestro Niccolò, who, they say, is also 'di Liberatore,' also a Folignese, also a quattroccentista; and they are most unwilling to suffer any one to attempt to set the error right."

The simple fact of course is that there was but one Maestro Niccolò di Liberatore, da Foligno, working and living in his native town in the fifteenth century; and that the origin of his being called *Alumno* is that discovered by Professor Rossi.

And now let us consider a little what work this man did, and what it still has to say to us from the distance of more than four centuries.

As for his technical merits, they need not be insisted on to the student of Mediæval art, and to the rest of the world it will be a sufficient guarantee that he possessed some distinguished qualities, to observe that his pictures are honourably placed in such great collections as the galleries of the Louvre, the Vatican, the Brera at Milan, the Academy of Fine Arts at Bologna, and others. But let us look now at some of his paintings with unprejudiced eyes, and try to find in them the touch of nature that makes us feel the far-away, foreign quattrocentista to be akin to our nineteenth-century selves. In the Vatican gallery, in the long room which contains the fine portrait of a Doge, by Titian, a Madonna and child enthroned, by Perugino, and other important pictures, are two large altar-pieces in several compartments, labelled "Niccolò Alunno." They are painted on wood, with gold backgrounds. Perhaps you have been enjoying the peaceful beauty, the clear symmetry and repose, which mark Perugino's Madonna and bambino surrounded by saints, and on turning round towards the opposite wall you are shocked by a distorted, upturned face, expressing the utmost abandonment of undignified sorrow. "What a hideous thing!" will probably be your unsophisticated but sincere exclamation. I have heard many such before that picture. But have a little patience, and survey old Maestro Niccolò's work a little more carefully, and I think you will find him worth considering.

The distorted face which I have mentioned belongs to a figure of St. John. The subject of the central compartment of the ancona (as the technical name for this sort of Gothic altar-piece runs) is the crucifixion, with the Magdalen kneeling at the foot of the cross, and the Virgin Mary and St. John standing on either side of it, gazing up at the figure of the Redeemer. St. John is not only weeping, he is *howling*! His mouth is wide open, and drawn to one side in a convulsion of crying. His hands are clasped and twisted in anguish. And, unpoetical as the phrase may be, honest truth compels me to say that his countenance gives you the vividest assurance that he is bellowing to be heard from the Vatican to Sant' Angelo! No doubt one might find all sorts of fine-spun theories to justify the distinct ugliness of St. John's demonstration of grief, and to show that in the year 1470, or thereabouts, it was the intense and naïf devotional sentiment of artists which made them so "realistic." For, alas, we have come, I fear, in this year of grace to consider the Real synonymous with the Ugly: a sad result, one would think; scarcely wholesome when confined to paint and canvas, but surely fatal if transferred to more purely spiritual regions! But it is not my business to account for Maestro Niccolò's St. John, still less to apologize for it. Let us look at the other figures in this compartment.

The Madonna's face is full of the profoundest grief, but she is neither howling nor sobbing. She has cried away all her tears long ago. The red and swollen eyelids and the ashen-grey mouth tell their own story. She stands very still and silent, with folded hands raised a

little, as if in prayer, and her gaze is fixed upon the dying figure on the cross. She has forgotten everything in the world—herself included—except her son. She will not disturb the majesty of that silent suffering even by a sigh. The beloved disciple may give vent to unrestrained emotion; not so the mother. She stands rigid and motionless, absorbed in one agony with her son. Not a fold of her dark blue draperies is stirred. She will not move again, be sure, until all is over, and they give that wounded body once more into the arms that first clasped it on earth. Mary Magdalen is kneeling, and stretches her arms upward towards Jesus. Her back is to the spectator, and is mantled with waves of flowing auburn hair. A half turn of the head enables us to see her face, tear-stained and woeful, with its brow all wrinkled up, partly with sorrow, and partly in her strained effort to gaze upward. The Saviour is an impressive figure in which the somewhat coarse presentment of physical torture is entirely over-ridden by the sublime patience of the martyr. Above the cross are angels crying and sobbing with an energy which rivals that of St. John; and one of them is applying a very large-sized pocket-handkerchief to his eyes. Somehow one cannot feel much sympathy with those angels, nor believe in one's inmost heart that they are thoroughly in earnest. Certainly the celestial sublimities—seldom attained by earthly pencil and pigments—are not here successfully grappled with by our Niccolò. What he *can* show us is the anguish of a loving mother's heart, and the utter self-abnegation of a woman at the feet of the divinity she adores.

Well, now let us look at the figures in the side divisions. First and foremost, to the left of the spectator, comes St. Peter, clad in full episcopal robes, mitre on head, and carrying the processional cross in his left hand; whilst in his right he holds the keys. Yes; he does hold them! They are not dangling, nor loosely supported by a careless finger and thumb; but he has them in a sinewy grasp, which says very plainly to all beholders, "*Dieu me les a données, le diable ne me les ôtera pas!*" This figure of St. Peter is one of the most striking I have ever seen painted. The head appears to me equal to those of the very greatest masters; at least, in so far as regards force, individuality, and vitality. The man is alive—breathing—you think he must speak soon. We are on the solid earth here. And whatsoever intensity of "naïf devotion" old Maestro Niccolò may have been filled with in painting his celestialities, it is clear that the inspiration did not suffice to produce anything half so good as this flesh-and-blood St. Peter—a man, and master of men! He is not aged, although his beard is grizzled, and his eyes are full of energy. I should not like to be a culprit before him if he were a judge, nor a vacillating prime minister if he were a king, nor a poltroon or incapable officer if he were a general. But he would be fair and just withal. He would take a large and sagacious view of things; would, may be, give you a hundred scudi if you were in need of them, and would certainly not let you cheat or cajole him out of a baiocco.

On the opposite side of the picture is a St. Porfirio, whose fame is, I fancy, chiefly confined to Camerino, a little town on the borders of Umbria and the Marches, where he was martyred, which also is wonderfully painted. He is not so fine a fellow as St. Peter. He is more smug and smooth; but full of quiet earnestness and intense individuality. He has a book in his hand, and looks up, holding his head on one side, with a half argumentative, half conciliatory, wholly clerklly air. I think these two were very familiar apparitions to Niccolò in the streets of Foligno. I believe that St. Peter, who grasps his keys so masterfully, was among the "*priori della città*"—*Magnifici domini priores populi Civitatis Fulginei* was their official style and title in all public acts and documents—and gave many a sagacious vote upon communal affairs. He was a man of mark and substance, be sure, and bonnets were doffed as he walked through the public ways. St. Porfirio, I fancy, was an ecclesiastic, possibly the superior of the convent of Sant' Agostino, Maestro Niccolò's favourite church, and our painter knew every turn of his face, and has given us a wonderfully vivid rendering of the courteous, soft-spoken, gentle-eyed churchman, with the suggestion of a strong, though elastic will in the velvet sheath of him.

But we must not linger before this ancona, or time will fail us to get a glimpse of the Maestro's life in his Umbrian city four hundred and odd years ago. One moment, however, I wish to pause before a companion picture in the same room and on the same wall; also an ancona painted on a gilt background. Here the central compartment displays the coronation of the Virgin, and the Virgin's face is very sweet and lovely. The colouring here appears to me to be inferior to that in the Crucifixion; whether injured by time, or by unskilful cleaning, my unlearned eyes cannot decide. But the face of that Madonna is beautiful; and it is the sort of beauty that grows on you as you gaze. The expression is wholly pure, and good, and gentle, without the over *douce* look of affected meekness which unpleasantly characterizes some Madonne Incoronate that I have seen. The Saviour here is far inferior in dignity and grace. Maestro Niccolò has not selected his model very happily, or has copied him too faithfully. But in truth, as I have said, the celestialities are not our Niccolò's forte. He does not breathe quite easily and naturally in the empyrean region which seems to be the native element of such a devout soul as the Beato Angelico, for example. On the other hand, the lively reality of most of his heads is very striking. They are wonderfully varied. Vasari says of him, ". . . inasmuch as he gave to all his figures heads copied from the real, and which seemed alive, his manner pleased very much." I venture to think that that "manner" will continue to please very much whenever we are fortunate enough to meet with it!

He had a great sense of humour, too, this quattroccentista. Look especially at two heads, one labelled St. Philip and the other St. James the Younger, in the lower part of the same ancona. They are half-figures, not larger than the palm of your hand, and yet how forcible and

full of character! St. Philip is reading some words painted in minute characters upon a scroll he holds, and of which one can decipher the words *judicare vivos et mortuos*. He has a huge pair of spectacles on his nose, and his countenance expresses the naïvest astonishment. "Bless my soul!" he seems to say, "is it possible?" He is rather of the Pantaloon type, with an advancing nose and retreating forehead; simple, credulous, and, one would say, garrulous. He may have been the barber, who retailed all the gossip of Foligno to Maestro Niccolò, as he clipped and shaved that worthy citizen and distinguished painter. St. James the Younger is also spectacled, also reading, also on the wrong side of fifty. But he is a very different individual from Philip. He has the air of a worldly-minded old gentleman, perusing the morning paper at his club, and smiling over it as he says to himself, "Ah, you won't find it easy to take me in! I understand things in general, and believe in very few of 'em." There is no shadow of historical foundation for the assertion, but nevertheless I have firmly made up my mind that this spectacled, mundane-looking apostle is the veracious portrait of the notary to the *Magnifici domini priores*—a functionary of some importance.

We often hear it said that the great masters of old times painted better than the moderns, and were paid worse. Without touching on the question of respective merits, it is satisfactory to know that competent artists in the fifteenth century were, on the contrary, excessively well paid. This is proved beyond the possibility of a doubt by documentary evidence. And Professor Rossi told me that he had made careful calculations, based on the price of corn, poultry, and other articles of food, from which it resulted that not only artists, but skilled artisans (the distinction between the two was a very faint and almost invisible one in the fifteenth century) were paid at a much higher rate than any such are now paid—at least in Italy.

Maestro Niccolò was born about the year 1430, in Foligno. The exact date is not known, but various circumstances, patiently hunted out from dusty rolls and archives by Professor Rossi, concur to prove that the year 1430 cannot be far from the truth. His father was Liberatore di Mariano, and seems, in spite of his want of a surname, to have belonged to a family that bore arms; for Niccolò, in a codicil to his will, bequeathed to his second son Marchesio a gold ring, engraved with the crest of his family. The house of Niccolò's father was contiguous to that of Maestro Pietro Mazzaforte, the painter. Now Maestro Pietro had an only daughter, and young Niccolò found the workshop of the well-to-do painter, Mazzaforte, a very attractive place. But that he did not spend all his time there in love-making, or in watching for a glimpse of the "bella Caterina," is satisfactorily proved by the pictures he painted. About the year 1452 the young Maestro Niccolò married Pietro Mazzaforte's daughter, and the marriage appears to have been a thoroughly well-assorted and happy one.

Thenceforward the record of our artist's life may be read from year to

year in the archives of his native city. He paints altar-pieces for churches and convents, and is commissioned by the Signor Jacopo Rossi, of Deruta, to paint a "tavola" (a picture on wood) for the church of San Francesco in that place, wherein the portrait of the pious donor appears, painted small, and bears a scroll with these words in Gothic characters: '*iacobus rubei de deruta fieri fecit hoc opus pro anima sua.*' In 1467 *Magister Nicolaus Pictor* sits among the councillors of the city. A few years later he is officially enumerated amongst those citizens who were eligible to be "priori." He does not appear ever to have filled that office; but his eldest son Lattanzio was priore in 1480, during his father's lifetime. Lattanzio also followed the art of painting. We see, therefore, that the good people of Foligno in those days had no idea that the fine arts unfitted one for the duties of a good citizen; or that because a man could draw heads full of beauty, expression, and character, his own must necessarily be incapable of common sense. Indeed, the business talents of Maestro Niccolò appear to have been held in as high estimation by his fellow-townsmen as was his artistic excellence. He is continually mentioned as sitting in the great Council, and twice he was elected to the 'Consiglio Centumvirale,' or Council of the Hundred, which was, according to the expression of the Chancellor of the *Comunità*, sacred *Deo optimo maximo*. He is nominated to select a doctor to the *Comunità*. He reports upon the condition of the public granaries, and makes some suggestions with regard to them, which are accepted by the vote of the Council, with sixty white balls against two black ones. Again, *Magister Nicolaus Pictor, Consiliarius*, makes the very shrewd and practical suggestion that the Signori priori shall be obliged, before retiring from office, to read to the assembled Council a relation of the incomings and outgoings of the *Comunità*, and that whosoever fails to do so shall pay a fine of two ducats, to be employed for the benefit of the *Monte Frumentario*, or public granaries before-mentioned. This proposition is approved by fifty votes out of fifty-five. After this we are not surprised to find that when *Magister Nicolaus Pictor* begs leave to make a well or cistern near to his own house, on the piazzetta of Sant' Agostino, which cistern will occupy forty-eight feet of public ground, the *Comunità*, "considering that for his merits he deserves to be favoured in everything," consents to his request.

On December 18, 1501, our painter is amongst the citizens present at a Council, wherein it is deliberated and decided to send a sort of embassy to Cæsar Borgia, to thank him for the offer he has made to take the city and the people of Foligno under his protection; to supplicate him to carry the offer into effect, and to promise fidelity to him against all enemies, but more especially against the Colonnas and Savellis. The personages chosen to convey this message to Cæsar Borgia were Monsignor Luca Cibo; the Magnifico Sigismondo de' Conti, Apostolic Secretary; Antonio Flavio Bagiarotto, Doctor of Laws, and five or six others of minor importance.

The idea of having recourse to the beneficent protection of Cæsar Borgia seems to us like a population of frogs choosing King Stork to rule over them. However, there are various historical indications that this particular Stork was sufficiently *bon prince* to prefer feeding on the frogs of his rivals and enemies, and only to have recourse to his own when he was very hungry indeed. The form of his *grazia*, or offer of protection, is curious, and runs as follows:—

"The most illustrious prince and glorious lord, Don Cæsar Borgia, Duke of Romagna, &c. &c. &c., Gonfalonier and Captain-General of the Holy Roman Church, moved by his spontaneous and imperial liberality and clemency to compassion for the misfortunes and calamities of this city and people, which, besides the present affliction of the famine, is oppressed and exhausted by frequent incursions, rapine, fire, and slaughter on the part of other peoples and lords, enemies of this city and people; has offered to the said city and people before his Holiness our Sovereign, his protection, defence, and safeguard against all assailants."

The enumeration of the ills to which Foligno was subject at this time is terrible enough. Early in the year 1502, Niccolò commenced a picture representing the martyrdom of St. Bartholomew for the church dedicated to that saint in Marano, but the illness which finally killed him prevented him from finishing it. It did not, however, make him unmindful of his word; for he left a codicil to his will, directing that the picture should be finished by his son Lattanzio. The will is a very curious document, attesting, as it does, in a lively manner that admixture of wealth and simplicity—almost bareness—of living which exists to this day in certain remote townlets and villages of Italy. I have myself seen, in a small town in the Tuscan Maremma, a house belonging to an ancient and respected family of the place, in which were combined in the strangest way evidences of considerable property (for example, a huge plate-chest full of solid silver standing open on a side-table during the progress of a very frugal dinner) with a Spartan disregard of comfort which no English farmer, nor even well-to-do artisan, would submit to.

Maestro Niccolò died a rich man. He received a handsome dowry of 250 florins with his wife, who was herself, as the reader will remember, the child of a painter, and bequeathed to his grand-daughter Minerva, child of his son Lattanzio, a marriage portion of 280 florins. How considerable these dowries were for that time and place may be gathered from the fact that in a sumptuary statute of Foligno, of the year 1454, a marriage portion of 300 florins is enumerated amongst those large ones which confer the right of expending 100 florins on the personal ornaments of the bride. This seems a large proportion—one-third of the whole fortune! But then the ornaments so purchased became heirlooms, and descended in the family from generation to generation. The patriarchal dependence on the father in which the

son lived is queerly exemplified by the following legacy :—"Maestro Niccolò bequeaths to his son Lattanzio not only three ounces of pearls which Paola, the wife of the latter, was accustomed to wear, together with a robe valued at twelve florins, and another with crimson velvet sleeves, but, moreover, the very gold ring with which the aforesaid wife of Lattanzio was married!" To his daughter-in-law, Paola herself, he leaves a brown mantle (the word expressing its colour in the original is "*monachino*," which denotes a brown hue like that of a Capuchin monk's habit), which had belonged to his own wife Caterina. He leaves to his granddaughter Camilla a girdle of crimson velvet ornamented with silver, which he bought from the heirs of Michele di Niccolò Picca. To his own daughter Agnes, who was married, he leaves a sum of seven florins to buy mourning after his death. He moreover arranges that in case of her being left a widow she is to have food, lodging, and fitting dress provided for her in the paternal house, on condition that she puts her dowry into a common stock with the fortunes of her brothers. He leaves to be divided equally between his two sons, Lattanzio and Marchesio, the entire stock of household stuffs, linen, woollen, hempen, and cotton, which had belonged to their mother Caterina; and he leaves to each of them vineyards and lands. To Lattanzio, who followed his own profession, he assigns "the stones of porphyry and marble, the designs, and everything belonging to the art and calling of a painter." He makes due provision for masses to be said for the repose of his soul, and leaves, moreover, a considerable sum of money to build a new altar in the church of Sant' Agostino in Foligno, "near to the main door and the chapel of San Biagio;" and to paint a picture for the adornment of the said altar. In a codicil to his will, dated August 18, 1502, he adds to the legacies of his second son, Marchesio, the ring with which his mother Caterina was married, and a mantle; also the ring I have previously alluded to, on which were engraved the arms of the family. He adds to the legacies of Lattanzio a mantle of purple cloth made expressly for him when he was one of the "priori" of the city. (We know that Lattanzio was elected "priori" in 1480.) Finally, he informs his sons of two debts owing to him, one of forty-eight florins by the monks of St. Bartholomew in Marano, the other of thirty florins by the men of the Castello di Bastia, both sums being the residue of the prices agreed upon for pictures painted by Maestro Niccolò. The picture in St. Bartholomew was not completed, as we have seen, and Lattanzio was directed to finish it.

The date of the codicil is August 18, 1502, and on the 1st of the following December we find the brothers Lattanzio and Marchesio coming to an amicable arrangement about the house property which they have inherited under the wills of Niccolò and of Caterina their mother. Between these two dates, therefore, we must fix the period of Maestro Niccolò's death. The same year carried off husband and wife, after a married life of nearly fifty years. It is probable that the same tomb

received their remains, and that this tomb was in the church of Sant' Agostino.

Thus ends the record we have of Maestro Niccolò di Liberatore, the painter, miscalled *Alunno*. To those who have any knowledge of the domestic life of the old Italian families—(not a knowledge easy of attainment by foreigners; for your thorough-bred Italian, with respect to strangers, is much of Shylock's mind: he will "buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following;" but he will not "eat with you, drink with you, or pray with you!")—it is curious to mark how little manners have changed amongst them during four centuries. I do not suppose, certainly, that now-a-days the head of a family would bequeath to his daughter-in-law her own wedding-ring; nor that his son's robe of office would be held to be the father's property which he could devise by will. Still, the dependence of grown men and women on their elders is far greater than with us. The whole family, comprising two or three generations, frequently live in the same palazzo, each branch occupying its special suite of apartments. And this circumstance answers an interrogatory I have often heard made by those new to the country: "What on earth *could* they do with these huge barracks of houses? How was it possible to occupy them?"

The phraseology, too, of Maestro Niccolò's will is comprehensible by the meanest of his countrymen to the present day. When I say "his countrymen," I would be understood to mean the people of his own province of Umbria. A Roman, a Tuscan, or a Lombard would probably be puzzled by several expressions used by our quattrocentista painter. Professor Rossi, writing for Italians, deems it necessary to explain, in a foot-note to the text of Niccolò's will, the signification of several words which are, he says, still commonly used in the neighbourhood of Foligno and Assisi. And he mentions but one word—signifying, according to the context, a copper vessel—which he has found no one in Umbria to understand.

On the whole, Maestro Niccolò led a good, useful, human existence, and has left behind him much from which we may gain pleasure and profit. It is clear that he had no high-flown notions about himself or his art. He used the good gifts that God had given him—his quickness of eye, intelligence, perception of character, and skill of hand—with honesty and simplicity. I was reading the other day a very able paper on artistic subjects, wherein mention was made of the "restrained and well-bred piety" which distinguishes the works of Perugino. An old Italian friend, himself a Perugian and a learned *cognoscente* in things of art, smiled slyly when I translated the phrase to him, and proceeded to give me sundry details (for which he can produce chapter and verse) tending to show that, whatever else might be Pietro Perugino's merits, a "well-bred piety" could scarcely be ranked among them!

A Negro Methodist Conference.

WINCHESTER (Virginia) is very unlike its stately English namesake, and is still, in fact, in rather a primitive condition. There is no greater mistake, however, than to take any individual American town as a type of many, or even of the State in which it is situated, so that in giving the following description of some interesting occurrences, at which we were present at Winchester, Virginia, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we are speaking of that place only, and not describing others under one comprehensive name, or painting classes of men from any of the individual models that passed before our eyes.

There were two negro, or *coloured*, churches in Winchester—one "Methodist Episcopal" and the other Baptist. Negroes in general belong to one of these two denominations, though there are also Episcopalian, *i.e.* Anglican, and Catholic congregations, in some large towns, while perhaps other small portions of the coloured population belong to various other religions. Every one knows that the negro is of an emotional, passionate, susceptible nature, and the Methodist Church offers him many attractions. Even white Methodists sometimes feel excited by their religious enthusiasm, and vent their emotions in gestures and exclamations which one would think very unlikely to be forced from them in their normal state of mind. It is not surprising, therefore, that the impulsive African should manifest his nature very freely during the religious "exercises" of the Methodist Church, and this we had an opportunity of observing during a Conference of coloured ministers, including those of Virginia, Maryland, District of Columbia, and West Virginia, which met at Winchester in the early spring of 1874. The Conference was officially called the "Washington Conference of the Coloured Methodist Episcopal Church." It lasted for a week. The Friday and Saturday before the opening Sunday were busy days on the railway: each train brought dozens of coloured ministers, some with, but most without, their families, and each carrying a bag or bundle, with his "go-to-meetin'" suit of glossy black, for there was to be an ordination on the closing Sunday. Most of these ministers were intelligent-looking men, and their clothes were in very good condition; some of the younger were quite dandified, and a few of the older wore gold spectacles. Though the town of Winchester is very small (it must be added that it is also old, for it has a history of 200 years, and was one of the first settlements of the Virginian colonists), there was no difficulty about lodging close upon 200 strangers. Each coloured person owning any

kind of home—shanty or log-hug, or the rarer cottage—gave hospitality to as many ministers as he could accommodate; and the least number was two, even although the host had but *one* spare room and bed. The people were proud of thus housing their pastors, and vied with each other in giving them the very best of food. A negro, man or woman, is born a good cook, and it is safe to say that many a white family, even in respectable circumstances, does not fare so well, or at any rate seldom fares better, than a coloured woman with a much smaller income. Some people say the latter often steals her provisions; we do not think they steal, on an average, more than a certain class of white servants do; and even granting that the material of the *cuisine* is stolen, there are few whites who, if they had stolen such material, would know how to turn it to such good account.

During the first two or three nights after the main body of the ministers had arrived, a few kept coming irregularly, and it became a question how to procure quarters for them. One evening a very old preacher was presiding over the meeting, and after gratefully thanking the people of the town for their lavish hospitality, and especially praising "the sisters," he added, very pleasantly: "But we have another brother who has just come, and we must find a home for him. Will any of the sisters come forward and give him hospitality? He is young and very good-looking; and you know the Bible tells us we may often entertain angels unawares."

Presently a young woman stepped forward, and claimed the newly-arrived minister as her guest, and the old man laughingly said: "Very well, sister; I commend him to your care; take him home, and feed him well, and give him a very good bed." The accommodation was doubtless scanty, but the will of the sister was good, though we suspect that she already had her hands full.

There were "exercises" every morning and evening, while the rest of the day was set apart for business. A white Methodist bishop presided. As yet there is no coloured bishop in the Methodist Church, a fact which occasioned one of the best addresses made to the students for the ministry during the Conference. The church where the meetings were held was small and very plain, whitewashed and galleried, and provided with a small *melodeon*, or species of harmonium without stops, and looking like a very diminutive cottage pianoforte. But the congregation was not dependent on this instrument for its music; the coloured churches had simply the best music in town. The choir proper consisted of a dozen men and women, who sang hymns beautifully and accurately in parts, while the whole congregation backed them up with a volume of sound more melodious than is generally heard in any white church in America. A negro could hardly sing out of tune if he wished to, and no choir but the surpliced one of a cathedral could outdo the performance of coloured singers, even if only very slightly trained.

At the chancel end of the church was a space railed off and raised

two steps above the level of the floor, while in the place of the altar stood a kind of tribune, where three men could stand abreast, with six or eight steps leading up to it on each side. This was used for prayer and preaching; the space below was fitted up with chairs for the bishop and some of the speakers, while two secretaries sat at a long table placed against the base of the tribune. The bishop wore a tail-coat and a white necktie, but scarcely looked dignified. The young secretaries, both of them candidates for deaconship, were good-looking and intelligent: many of the young men had been through a regular theological course in the new colleges and seminaries that the coloured Methodists have established since the Act of Emancipation, but the old ministers were rougher and harder—*field-preachers* in old times, when they were also labourers or servants. (*Slave* was a word never heard in the South; the agricultural labourers were called "field hands," and the negroes employed in domestic service simply "servants.") One of these old men, relics of a past state of things, Brother Snowdon, was over eighty years of age; but his mind was as bright and his heart as tender as ever, and one night, when he prayed, which he did in as good language as most white people, his words stirred the sympathy of his hearers, both white and black, as few *extempore* prayers can now-a-days. His words were fervent and poetic, however vague if looked at in any doctrinal sense, and we hardly like to set them down in our own form, because we made no notes at the time, and therefore should do injustice to the speaker. His aspect, too, told how earnest he was, and how the love of the Saviour powerfully affected him, leading him into all manner of energetic, poetic expressions, and firing him with a missionary zeal towards all those who heard him.

It would be impossible to gather together all the incidents of that week: every day and night was full of interesting details, each characteristic of the earnestness of the men assembled and the passionate sympathy which they raised in their hearers. The two hundred ministers filled up the pews in the body of the church during the business meetings, and the spectators sat in the galleries. It was interesting to mark the differences among those dark faces. Some preserved the true African type, though we hardly remember one that was absolutely black. Though most of them had the ordinary woolly hair, a few had it wavy but smooth (and evidently oiled to make it smoother still), and one, whose face was very dark, had straight, wiry hair. If the colour could have been taken from some of them, you would have judged this one by his features to be a shrewd Yankee, eager and investigating, and that other a scholarly Jew, quiet and thoughtful. In the galleries, especially at the evening prayer-meetings, the variety of curious faces was much greater; there were men who might almost sit for baboons, and one with such a marvellous head of hair that it stood out round his face like a black halo, four or five inches broad. Others, on the contrary, wore their hair close cropped, so that it was not more conspicuous than the down of a black

swanling. The women, too, were of all kinds, from the old "auntie," whose face was all fat and good-natured, to the haughty, saucy, or pensive maiden, whose skin was more white than "coloured." Of these there were many, most of them very pretty, and well, *i.e.* quietly, dressed, with ladylike manners and sweet, gentle voices. No uninitiated person would have known that these girls were not of pure Caucasian blood, unless the fact had been revealed to him by seeing them walk arm-in-arm with ordinary "dandies" of every shade. Social equality is the one thing which the coloured race will perhaps never win, save in the persons of a few who will emphatically remain exceptions; and it is noticeable that it is not only the Southern people who recoil from this, but the foreigners and the immigrants from Europe, who, no matter how lowly their own condition, feel an instinctive dislike to social equality with the negro race.

We have, perhaps, taken up too much space in describing them, and commenting on them, and it is time to go on with what was done and said, which, after all, is the best illustration of any living subject. The first time we went to the church was on a week-day, and a morning session was going on. It was a good specimen of the business meetings. The elders and representatives of the most prominent churches sat on the two front benches, and the speakers and secretaries occupied the space behind the rails. The bishop looked neutral and weary. One very impulsive speaker, an agent of the Bible Society, who mysteriously described himself as belonging to no particular race, having African, European, and Hindoo blood in him, was holding forth on the subject of schools and seminaries. He looked like an ordinary white man. He spoke well and to the point, and specially shone in anecdote. He laid the greatest stress on the necessity of education, and told a story of a young white student who came to his father with a bundle tied to a stick, and in a generally deplorable plight, not to ask for charity, but to beg, in a bright, eager manner, to be allowed to enter a school of theology "where my father was an 'exhorter.'" He was admitted, and to-day he is a bishop in the Methodist Church, and one of our most enterprising men. Do you know," he went on, "that until a coloured student shall come with that indomitable spirit, and grapple with like difficulties, and, as it were, conquer an education, I shall not believe in our having a coloured bishop among us?" Here there were deep murmurs of approval, and the speaker went on urging the cause of education, and instancing other cases of eagerness for learning, his own among the rest, when, on being called away from school by unexpected family circumstances, and not having a farthing in his pocket, he refused to borrow money, and equally determined to stay away no longer than was absolutely necessary. Many of his school-fellows, under the same pinch, had got home, but had to stay at home, having no money to pay their way back to school; but he, taking a bundle with him, started on foot for his home, which was sixty miles away, and accomplished thirty

the first day. His feet were swollen and bleeding, and he made bold to knock at the door of a man in the village which he reached at night who had known his father. He told him his story, and the man sheltered him for a day, and would have kept him longer, but he determined on going on, and so reached his home the next day, walking another thirty miles at one stretch. He stayed long enough to rest and get strong again, and when the business was over for which he was needed—very likely it was some agricultural crisis—he started for school again, quite undismayed by his previous experience. Then another speaker got up and answered him by a second eulogism on education, especially of that for theological students; and then followed a motion which one of the brethren was anxious to make this year, he said, and which he considered very important. He was a grave-looking man, about forty-five, with gold spectacles and black kid gloves; and his speech, perfectly grammatical and well accented, proved him to be, if not of the post-slavery school of students, at least one of the progressive school of reforming ministers. Indeed, as far as peculiarities were concerned, this Conference was not what would be called “characteristic;” the ministers are the picked men of the race, and strive after the same decorous uniformity of manner and speech as that which distinguishes the white men of their profession. Besides the Virginian negro, even in his most unnatural state, is not nearly so amusing in character as the negro of the more Southern parts of the country. His dialect is far less peculiar, and even his accent is not remarkably striking. When this minister whom we have mentioned rose in his place to make his “motion,” he addressed himself to the bishop in earnest tones, denouncing the “free use of tobacco among the ministers,” and inveighing against it. Immediately a titter ran through the audience, but the bishop still looked weary and impassive. “I say,” the speaker went on, “that it is a disgrace to the ministry; I have seen ministers chew in the very pulpit, and dishonour the Lord’s house by this filthy habit. It is unclean and injurious; it is a vice more than a habit, and those who renounce liquor ought also to renounce tobacco. It is bad in any form, but especially in that disgusting form in which too many of our brethren use it in the house of the Lord. I move that the use of tobacco be made a disqualification for candidates to the ministry, and that henceforth no young man shall be ordained who is unwilling to swear that he will not use tobacco in any form.”

The argument, of course, is here much condensed. The man was very vehement in his denunciation, but evidently his hearers scarcely sympathised with his project of reform; many of the older ministers looked at each other with suppressed merriment, and others were engaged in protesting against the restriction by quietly doing the very thing against which the speaker was discoursing. When he had done the votes were taken, as customary the “ayes” and “noes” alternately standing up and being counted over by one appointed for the purpose. Hardly half a dozen stood up with the reformer, and the whole body

rose when the "noes" were called for. The motion was directed, however, to be laid on the table, and the bishop promised to say a few words on the subject when the morning's business was disposed of. In order not to break our narrative by again referring to this subject, we will give the bishop's opinion at once. He spoke, as he always did, with singular impressiveness, but quite to the point. He agreed with Brother — that the use of tobacco was neither healthy nor dignified, and was especially to be deprecated during Divine service or in the pulpit; but he said that while he recommended young candidates for the ministry to wean themselves from it, and make good resolutions against indulgence in it, he could not advise the extreme measure of turning the question into a test of moral fitness for the ministry. Then he put in a touching plea for the older ministers.

"They had been bred up to a hard lot," he said, "and in days when the slave had but little enjoyment within his reach, tobacco had become both a stimulant and a comfort to him. He had his little tobacco patch, his only personal property, and the use of the weed had been a great solace. Many of our brethren have been brought under this system, and could not give up the habit without injuring their health, or, at any rate, seriously interfering with their comfort, so that it would be neither wise nor charitable to deny them this little enjoyment, which, after all, is very harmless, provided it be indulged in moderately."

Of course the motion was a failure, as any one but an enthusiast could have foreseen; and yet the motive of the reformer was thoroughly praiseworthy, and we must say he had every reason to be practically disgusted with the abuse which he so eagerly denounced. Another discussion followed on the case of a minister (or a candidate—we forget which) who had quarrelled with his wife, and whose reconciliation with her was not yet satisfactorily arranged. The question was whether he should be debarred from officiating (or should be considered unfit for ordination) until he should have made friends with her again. It was noticeable that the bishop made the case turn entirely on the wife's decision. It had already been premised that no immorality was involved, but only some domestic disagreement. Still, the thing had given scandal. At last one spokesman got up and settled the question by saying that he had reason to suppose that the wife was practically reconciled, and that he took it upon himself to declare that the "brother" was therefore fit for the ministry. The vote was in his favour as soon as each voter had satisfied himself that the *wife had agreed to all that had been proposed*.

Then came an examination of the candidates, mostly young men. Some elder or minister answered for the moral and intellectual worth of each. The form of examination was read from a book, and one of the questions was, "Are you in debt?" The same "brother" answered for the character of several of the young men, and his formula of endorsement of their claims was generally pretty much the same:—"Fine young

man, very good at his studies;" but one of them deserving especial eulogium, the circumstances were more detailed, and the elder added: "A year ago he could not write his own name, but so diligent was he that he now writes a good hand, and has equally progressed in his other studies. His report is excellent."

Now there appeared a group of ministers of various white churches, and the pastor of the coloured Baptist church, who came to fraternise with their Methodist brethren. The bishop presented them each by name to his people, and bade them be seated as guests among them. The most striking among them was the Lutheran minister, a tall, stately man, with regular features, thoughtful expression, and an Oriental beard. Another individual whom no one could have overlooked in this gathering was the agent of the "Methodist Book Concern," a tall, florid, prosperous man, smoothly shaven and with vigorous-looking white hair. He was a regular "Yankee," as his quaint speech testified; we do not mean his accent, but his manner of speaking. He was evidently given to anecdote and to sensational announcements, and could have sat for the picture of the prosperous auctioneer in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*. He patronised education in a large, emphatic way, and morally "patted on the back" the speaker whose father had been an "exhorter." But he outdid him in pleasant stories, some of which we attempt to reproduce. He likened education to a lake into which you throw puppies, to teach them to swim, and then descanted on the cognate advantages of camp-meetings. All his talk was complacently jerky and effectively startling.

"Some years ago," he said, "I attended a camp-meeting in Western New York. The exercises were continual; the faithful and elect were praying and singing all day, the ministers were very zealous, and the place was quite a show to the worldly people who came to see and enjoy the fun and the fervour. Well, you may think such a meeting was very barren when I tell you that no one was 'converted' but one miserable tin-peddler, who, with his donkey-load of goods, had stopped to ply his trade among the faithful. The meeting broke up, and the worldly spectators laughed at it; but I know how much good that one tin-peddler did after his conversion: how he became as good as a missionary, and sold tracts with his pots and pans; and when people could not afford to buy the tracts, he gave them away; or if folks would stop and have a talk with him, he turned the conversation on spiritual things, and did them more good than they themselves suspected at the time. . . . And when I come to think of what has been done in our day for foreign missions among the coloured race, and especially in the opening up of Africa, I say to myself, there is no knowing but that some day our children may assist at Methodist camp-meetings at the Mountains of the Moon. . . . Then see our mission funds, from what small beginnings they have swelled to hundreds of thousands! I remember when I was at school there was a boy who was very eager for foreign missions, but he was

poor. Now, we had a missionary fund to which we paid only two cents* a month, but this boy very seldom had two cents to spend, and often had to borrow the money, which he repaid by earning it in some small boyish way, but he never missed giving his contribution, and never forgot to repay his debt. And what do you think happened to him since? The other day he gave 25,000 dollars to our Church, and often gives large contributions to any Methodist charity or school. He is a rich man now, and growing richer every day. But he had pluck and 'go' in him from the first. . . . And now I'll tell you something about Rome, where for the first time there is a Methodist church and mission established. The ministers have made many converts among the *Ey*-talian soldiers, and you know those soldiers guard the Pope, so that his enemies may not get at him. Just think of that: the Pope is now protected by Methodist bayonets! And more than that, there's a nice Methodist altar in his old city, where he can go to, and be prayed for and repent, if he likes, for it is a free church, and every one can come if he only chooses."

Applause and merriment greeted these paradoxical announcements, and the speaker, who saw that he had produced a favourable stir, retired quite proud of his oratory. And indeed this style of lecturing, so often heard in temperance meetings, is about the most effective that can be used. The "Yankee" carried off the honours of the day, and took advantage of it to suggest that if any of the ministers wished to make arrangements for supplies of books suited for a school library in their respective parishes, he should be in Winchester that afternoon only, and would be glad to meet them to talk matters over.

The evening prayer-meetings were the really interesting part of the proceedings. The whole coloured population, and a large portion of the whites, crowded into the little church; people fainted with the heat, and sat almost on each other's knees; the railed space, the tribune steps, were full; and the speakers had the greatest trouble to move about. Though this was no revival, and consequently not nearly so thrilling a time, yet the various scenes were very impressive. There was no theatrical display of unreal emotion; all was passionate, intense, and true. There were quite as many men as women, and the former seemed, if anything, the more moved of the two. No human respect was there; no one was ashamed to show his feelings, and elderly ministers sobbed like children whenever any word or aspiration of the speakers touched their hearts. The sermons or addresses generally began quietly enough; sometimes an appeal was made for the support of infirm pastors or their destitute widows and orphans (the collection on this occasion was confined to the two hundred ministers themselves), or some call for help was made for distant or foreign missions. After this the real exhortation began, and as the speaker warmed with his subject his face glistened, his gestures grew impassioned, his eyes shone through tears, and his whole body shook

* A penny.

with excitement. There was no doctrine or controversy broached, but vague words, full of infinite suggestions, came pouring from his lips—i.e. the love of the Lord, how He died for the love of us all, how little we do to show Him our love, how He calls us at every moment, how His love watches over us, how our sins disappoint and wound Him. The changes were continually rung on this heavenly love, but the subject seemed ever new. It was inexhaustible, and the emotion produced was always as strong. Women rocked themselves to and fro, and groaned audibly, while cries of assent rose from all sides, from young and old, from men and women: "God grant it!" "Amen!" "Yes, that's so, that's so!" "Bless the Lord!" The sermon usually ended with a prayer; it does so almost naturally, it would seem, with all emotional people; the Italian preachers never fail, and often the French follow their example, to wind up with a prayer, during which their hearers kneel; and this end of a sermon is often the most impressive and heart-stirring part. The emotion in the coloured Methodist churches is no less, though it does not take the form of kneeling. Between the addresses (there were three every night) hymns were sung. Once we heard a curious melody, which some said was a native African one—a kind of swinging *crow*, full of spirit and yet of a wild melancholy. The singing was always in parts, and exquisitely accurate. The whole body of the people joined, and during an interval if any one felt impelled to start a verse of any other hymn, he or she would do so, and be quickly supported by others. One of their hymns, "Out on the Ocean sailing," was very good; but the next turned out to be a disguise of "Auld Lang Syne" fitted to hymn words. Allusions were sometimes made to slavery, and of course were responded to by a burst of enthusiasm, murmurs and pious ejaculations all strangely mixed together; but it must be remembered that the speakers were the intellectual flower of their people, and that their feeling is more acute and more educated than that of their flocks. Individually very few negroes ever suffered from the old system as they have from the destitution that has come upon them as a consequence of freedom; from cared-for servants many have become paupers, and the practical change cannot be compensated for in the minds of the illiterate by the theoretic progress from their former condition to that of a "free and independent citizen." Still, the allusion to slavery is a stock phrase in an address, and never fails to bring forth a feeling which does not really gauge the attitude of the average negro's mind concerning a question so complicated as the "peculiar institution."

The evening meetings were certainly the most attractive feature of the Conference; one felt drawn to the scene by a great sympathy rather than a great curiosity. The effect of religious ideas on various temperaments is one of the most interesting studies to which man can apply himself. So much has been said of the bonds which unite the Creator with the more helpless and childlike part of His creation that we need not dwell on the subject here; it is more suited to the pulpit than to a

sketch of this kind. And since people build so many various theories on one and the same fact, we will limit ourselves to supplying them with this groundwork, without hinting at our own thoughts with respect to this gathering of earnest, loving Christians. The last ceremony of the Conference was the ordination service, which was held at the large and pretentious white Methodist church, a specimen of architecture which some of our artistic church-builders would with reason have wished to have existed at the time of the Flood, that it might have been swept off the face of the earth. The same arrangement of the chancel-end prevailed as in the small church; the body of the church and the right hand gallery were filled with negroes of every shade, while the left-hand gallery was kept for the white congregation and the spectators. An harmonium had been placed just outside the railed space, and the choir assembled there. The candidates sat in two rows just in front of the rails, all arrayed in their best clothes, some of them in cloaks very like professors' robes. The bishop, in his certainly rather ungraceful dress, and many of the older ministers, sat within the rails. Before the service began hymns were sung, and the white brethren were not shy in making their wishes known to those below. One asked one coloured brother to sing "Home, sweet Home," and the people replied heartily, singing it better than any white body of singers ever did in our hearing, whether at church or concert hall. Some one else then called for some other favourite tune, and the congregation gratified him, and so on several times. At last the service began with some prayers, and the bishop preached. An elder (just before the sermon) gravely entreated his brethren to abstain from the use of tobacco during the service, and to show their gratitude for the use of the church by leaving it as clean as it was when they entered. The men sat on one side, the women on the other, and all were decorous in the extreme. The sermon began; the duties of the ministry were descanted on, and the general duty of perseverance and faith in God's intentions inculcated, which idea the preacher illustrated by telling his hearers the story of Columbus. He described very graphically, and with increasing emotion—though not animation—the disappointments which the discoverer had to encounter, and the feeling with which he at last descried "land" after his dangerous journey. The audience had gradually grown very much excited; the slightest dramatic touch was enough; they seized upon it, and evinced as much feeling as if the facts were actually taking place before their eyes. At the word "land" the bishop pointed upwards—the first gesture he had used—and his hearers' emotion burst forth. Sobs were heard here and there, and two or three voices cried "Hallelujah!" There was a stir and a swaying through the crowd, and men bent their heads and women flung up their arms in a sort of nameless excitement. The bishop paused a little, then went on, rather more movedly than before, and evidently under some unusual spell of enthusiasm, of which in those quiet business meetings one would have supposed him incapable. Then he spoke of

sorrow and resignation, and here too he showed heartfelt emotion. He spoke of a little daughter of his, and described her gentleness and her winning ways, until it seemed as if every one in the crowd had his or her mind fixed on some one pet child of their own, some little hearth-angel they had cherished and lost; and every one was in tears, the men showing their feeling even more unrestrainedly than the women. "This little girl," said the bishop, "was only eight years old, but God took her from me by a terrible death—for she was burnt."

Here he paused, too much affected to go on; the tears stood in his eyes, and many of the white spectators wept with him. But with the negroes it was a real wail of desolation, an echo of Rachel's cry, and the sorrow was sincere, deep, and not so momentary, either. There were hardly any words or ejaculations this time, but the feeling was yet more marked. It must have gone to the speaker's heart and comforted it, for the sympathy was intense. After the sermon the ordination service was read; the deacons who were to become elders or ministers were ordained first, then those students who were to become deacons. They all stood at the rails in a row, and the bishop placed his hands on their bowed heads, and delivered the Bible into their hands, giving them authority to act as ministers of God's word. Among the deacons was an old white-headed man, who stood next to a stalwart, comely young mulatto. It was a touching contrast.

The rest of the day was spent in orderly rejoicing and family feasting. Two more services were held, as farewell pledges of peace and goodwill. During the week a few small parties were given among the *élite* of the coloured people, all householders and hotel servants and others earning good wages being considered eligible. The pretty girls whom we have mentioned as nearly white were the envied beauties and queens of these gatherings, and perhaps the seeds were then sown which would some day ripen into a companionship that would make the young ministers' pastoral duties very light and sweet to them.

Mr. Campbell's Pupils.

ONE morning a certain number of people had come straggling into the empty music-room at the Crystal Palace, deserted as yet and only lined with a silent audience of straw-chairs; an hour or two later every corner would be filled, every place be packed with a mass of listening people following the quivering bow of the leader, and absorbed in eager attention. As yet only the chairs were set out in the area below, while up above the musicians were installed. The members of the chorus were in orderly array, the violins in their eddying lines and rows, the drums prepared to boom at their appointed seasons, and tinkling things in their places, and flutes ready to strike up, and wind instruments to join their breath to the wavings, and streamings, and stirrings of the great concerto about to *be*, incarnated for the time in the performers and the listening men and women.

Joachim had been absent in his own country and now, after long silence, he had come back to his faithful English auditors. It had been announced that he was to lead the orchestra on this occasion and one or two old friends and acquaintances had come from town to be present at the rehearsal, and to bid him welcome. The old friend, who sits quietly waiting in the front row with folded hands, and soft grey hair and peaceful spiritual looks, is a musician herself—a true artistic soul, ever ready to answer to the call of those who surround her gentle life, and to be herself carried away from its anxious cares by the strains she knows so well how to love. People who are listening often seem to me as touching as the music itself; one may watch their faces, transfigured as the echoing radiance reaches them in turn. Music, like sunshine, belongs to all; neither age, nor illness, nor sorrows, hinder all its present blessing. It is not only for the happy; it is for the old, for the lonely, the forlorn, the disgraced in fortune and men's eyes. To all of these the faithful strains may speak of comfort, sympathy, forgiveness, with a strange personal impersonality.

Behind Miss H—— three young women with sweet intent faces were following the score. And then just behind them a mother and her son were sitting together; and I remember no one else except the friend who had brought me. We were still expecting our musician when a side door opened, and a little file of people came in, quietly making their way from chair to chair, and settling down in a group. There may have been about twenty young men and women. One of the attendants, passing at that

moment told me that these were students from the Normal College for the Blind, close by, who are allowed the privilege of coming weekly to these rehearsals at the Crystal Palace. Then somebody else says "Hushsh." We hear a stir, a clapping welcome in the orchestra—there stands the leader in his place. It is strangely homelike to meet the glance of those thoughtful eyes, to recognise the brown Straduaris once more; the violin of the wonderful sobs and tender laughter that has so often swept us all into its charmed circle. For a few minutes all the orchestra is in a ferment and turmoil of greeting, and the conductor is acknowledging its good will, and then suddenly, at the tap of the bow upon the music stand, they all settle down to work, for no time is to be lost.

This particular concerto of Mendelssohn's begins with one single note, flashing, exquisite, breaking the silence of months for us; as it sung and thrilled on that day it seemed to awaken something in us all; it was like the first ray of light after the darkness of the night darting from behind the horizon in the early dawn, to be followed by all the lovely flames of sunrise. I wondered how the note struck the blind scholars, listening absorbed. Did it seem indeed a flashing of light in their darkened world?

I have paid more than one visit to the pupils at the College, since the morning when we listened together to that wonderful performance at the Crystal Palace. The master and mistress, Mr. Campbell and his wife, have always received us with great kindness, and have certainly made us feel more and more in sympathy with their object, their pupils, and their teaching. It is a teaching which some people may think not confined to the blind alone, for it suggests something beyond object lessons and music itself. "If people are no use, and are no longer trying to help one another," said some one in the College, "I think they had better come to an end at once. They are not wanted any more, neither here nor anywhere else." But the spirit of good-will predominates in the place, and every one there seems to be wanted.

An eager courage; hopeful trusting in others, a sympathy undaunted by difficulty: these are the qualities by which men are upheld in their work and enterprise, by which other people, more dull perhaps to see possibilities of good, less trustful by instinct, are nevertheless swept along almost unconsciously until they find themselves one day fellow-workers in some cause which has become their own. The first time I was at the College the foundation of the new house had scarcely risen above the slope of the lawn upon which it stands; the last time I went there good stout walls were upreared, the beams of the roof were being covered in, and a comfortable solid mansion, nearly completed, seemed to promise the permanent establishment of an important institution conducted upon the American system among us. Mr. Campbell told me that from all the people to whom he had applied, at one time or another for advice or assistance, he had scarcely ever met with a refusal, and only once with an instance of positive unkindness; and this was

from a person who came forward afterwards, unasked, and most materially and generously benefited the College. Mr. Campbell first called upon us with a letter from a friend, about a year ago, and in reply to our questions told us very simply how it happened that he, a stranger in our land, alone, without means or influence (except indeed that inestimable influence of personal character), should have determined to found an institution conducted according to the methods so successfully carried out in his own country. He had been for thirteen years or more musical director, and for some time resident superintendent of the Boston School for the Blind, and had come over, with his wife, to Europe for a holiday, to recruit his health after very long-continued hard work. Their return passage was taken, and it was only two days before the ship was to start that he happened to attend a certain meeting of blind poor in London, and that his attention was from circumstances forcibly drawn to the sufferings of some among them. Mr. Campbell spent some hours there, and talked to one person and another. He walked home, utterly crushed and dispirited, he told me; for the first time recognising the lives to which some of these uneducated, untrained, and suffering human beings were necessarily condemned. "In America," said the American, "things were differently arranged." By the time he got back to his wife, he had made up his mind. He said to her, "I think there is work for us to do over here. We will not go back; we will wait and see if we cannot do something for some of the English blind;" and so, with music in his gift, and relief from bonds of unspeakable weight, in a helping spirit of generous interest, this American, with the assistance of some true friends, has spent the last few years following out his plans, administering the funds which have been placed at his disposal, encouraging, educating, and inspiring his followers. By the advice and with the material assistance of a committee, he has founded this college, to which pupils now come from all parts of England, and from all gradations of society. Some of them (and, strangely enough, these are among the very brightest and best-looking of the little pupils) are from the workhouse, some have struggling, some have sensible well-to-do parents, who feel their children's advantage in dwelling in this community, where music is so admirably understood, and where a higher degree of cultivation is attained by the scholars than many a child with sight to help it on can hope for.

It is pleasant to read the hearty commendations of those sent to report upon the working of the College:

I am confirmed in my impression that in this College, if nowhere else, the difficulties which are generally supposed to attend all attempts to cultivate the minds of blind persons are entirely overcome, and that this may fairly be recommended as a model for all institutions in this country which have for their object not merely to teach the Blind to read the Bible and to make mats and baskets, but to generally educate them as well as to specially instruct them in the one subject in which the might be expected to equal if not surpass sighted persons—that of music.

(Signed)

J. RICH BRYNE,

H.M. Inspector of Schools.

And again :

The vocal practice I found to be systematic, and carefully attended to. The piano playing was excellent, and the players, even to the youngest, were able to describe, as if the book were open before them, the whole notation of the music played. It is impossible to overrate the importance of this method, because by it alone the blind become teachers of those who see.

The models of the various component parts of a pianoforte, in the department set aside for the training of tuners, pleased me very much, and I am not surprised to hear that some of the students of the College are already earning their living as thoroughly competent tuners.

(Signed) JOHN STAINER, M.A., Mus. Doc.

"It is a mere question of expense," says Mr. Campbell, who is blind himself, and who speaks from experience, "of patience in the teachers, of liberality in those who provide the means. A blind man's Bible costs, perhaps, fifty times as much as a common edition; his maps, his writing materials, every article in the school, is complicated and expensive in proportion." How cheap it is to have eyes! How much it costs to be blind! About 5,000*l.* more is wanted to complete the College, to furnish, to pay for the current expenses, to stock the shelves and the minds of the young scholars. It would be nice to send them the money all in sovereigns; the children would soon count it out into heaps, calculate the interest, the compound interest, how much for each person taught, how much immediate returns.

Some pupils only enter for a few weeks, learn the technical appliances, and go off; others come and remain for some time. One young man, after a year or two's tuition, was lately engaged by a great piano firm, in Manchester, and is already receiving 25*s.* a week as a tuner. Another, strange to say, is making a living out of the musical capabilities of the Bideford fishermen. He is organist in the church there, he has classes and lectures, and is supporting himself comfortably in that sunny cleft.

The appliances are singularly ingenious, and every day new adaptations are devised, by which form supplies a meaning to absent colour, and strange dots and ridges speak to the wise and sensitive fingers. The blind themselves are the most successful engineers in this apparently impracticable country. Here are maps that take to pieces and which the children know by heart; they can spread out Europe, Asia, America, without a moment's hesitation—a small fair-headed creature of nine years old starts off for a tour of the world and runs her little finger from shore to shore and from ridge to ridge, flying along in some magical mirage of her own and calling out nations, countries, oceans, and cities as she goes. One thing strikes one specially as one watches the working of the school, which is that all that the blind accomplish is thoroughly impressed upon their minds; cram, flare, sham knowledge can scarcely exist for them. The children having explained their maps produce their slates and do their sums with great quickness and clearness. One little

boy is given the two sides of a room and told to calculate the diameter; half-a-dozen more on a bench multiply, divide, add so much, shout out a square root as fast as the mistress can give the problem. Once they find her out and say that she is wrong and the mistress laughs and says that her pupils are right. Their slates are frames and soft boards, with paper upon which they prick the dots that represent either notes or numerals: when they reverse the paper they can follow the dotted lines and read what they have written down. A sum is a formidable thing under these circumstances, but they seem able to work out most things in their minds; they write a few memoranda and come to a solution far more quickly than by the old agonizing process of scratching pencil and slate and tear-smudged figures which many of us remember. It is the whole difference between doing work mechanically by the eye and with a mind intent upon the work. Mr. Campbell spoke with great feeling of the desire he felt for a real education for all the blind people; an education not of brushes and door-mats, which can scarcely be deemed sufficient interest for a life, an education not of leading-strings, but one of enterprise and real vital interest. Music is the most important element in his work, but music alone would not be enough; even more than others, must blind people learn to see, and learn with courage and patience all that comes naturally to those who are more fortunately circumstanced.

The object lessons are very curious; every variety of question is asked and answered, animals named in a way that Adam himself most assuredly could not have accomplished; races, divisions, subdivisions enumerated. "Those are those that *masticate* their food," cries one little naturalist from one side of the room. The little girls from their benches at the other end all put up their little hands at every question and can answer anything. They describe every variety of animal, vegetable: "Lions look bold and king-like," they say. "They are 'markably strong,'" cries a little boy in an awe-stricken voice. The children are asked what are the vegetable products of Iceland. "Nothing at all," says a sweet little pipe. Then suddenly the little girl who is called Jessie brightens up,— "Oh, yes, there is a sort of fine moss which is used for cooking," she cries.

I asked the teacher what books they chiefly used, and she told me *Wood's Natural History* and some simple scientific books of Dr. Hooker's. These are read out to the children and explained to them *viva voce*. I suppose it was as a treat on this occasion that the stuffed model of a cat with a mouse in its mouth was brought out and gravely handed down the class from child to child. Nothing was said; each in turn felt it carefully over, stroked the skin and the tail and passed it on in silence.

A music lesson I once heard given interested me most of all, the children's faces brightened up so delightfully, the master's skill was so spontaneous and suggestive. He played a few simple chords and modulations, then came a little fairylike creature who repeated them diffidently by ear, then more certainly, having seized the idea; her kind master made her show her skill in different ways. She played by ear,² she played by memory with

greatest accuracy, then another girl sung to us with an exquisite soprano voice, thrilling and thrilling the sweetest cadences, then came a mezzo-soprano, very true and tender in expression. A dictation followed in the numerals which represented the notes and the children pricked and dotted assiduously on the frames upon their knees. When this was over Mr. Campbell bade them read what they had written down, and they turned their pages, ran their fingers over the marks at the back. "Well," said he smiling, "what is it?" A pause; he plays one note upon the piano; a sort of sudden flash along the little line, "The BLUE BELLS of Scotland," cries a little eager girl, and all the others begin to laugh and exclaim, and the master's face brightens too in sympathy with their eagerness.

In another room the young men were receiving instructions two at a time from a pianist who seemed thoroughly to understand his business.

"He is a teacher after my own heart," says Mr. Campbell, when he comes to call us away. The whole working of the house strikes one at once as homely and efficient. I have seen them at all times at their tea, at their evening service, or again filing off to lectures or suitable entertainments. All is quietly and quickly organised, although there do not seem to be half-a-dozen persons in the house who can see. One day they were at prayers, some one read a chapter from the Bible, the young folks sang a hymn; it was a very simple, very tranquil act of worship at the end of the day. There was a sense of peace in it all, and a blessing, I am sure, upon the cheerful and contented labourers.

Mr. Campbell dwelt very much upon the success he had had in America in teaching his pupils to tune pianos, and here too in England the effort seems likely to succeed. Dr. Armitage, in a valuable little book upon the education of the blind, says that the average earnings of the blind at their various trades scarcely exceeds five or six shillings a week; but there are some occupations in which the blind possess a positive advantage over the seeing, from their greater power of concentration. Piano-tuning is one of them. He gives an interesting account of the origin of this profession as a profession for the blind:

"About the year 1830, Claude Montal and a blind fellow-pupil attempted to tune a piano on which they practised. It, as well as the other pianos in the institution, was kept in very indifferent tune by a seeing tuner. This man complained to the directors, who administered a sharp reprimand to the two blind pupils, forbidding them ever again to touch the works. Nothing daunted, however, the two friends procured an old piano, and obtained permission to keep it in the institution. They practised themselves in taking it to pieces and remounting it; nor did they rest content until they had thoroughly repaired it and brought it into good tune.

"The next step was to begin regular instruction in tuning, and then commence the tuning classes which have made the Paris School famous throughout the civilised world. Montal soon left the institution and

endeavoured a private tuning connection, but the same prejudice which now exists in London against blind tuners was then in full force in Paris. No one liked to trust a piano to the blind man, and for some time he was glad to be allowed to tune gratuitously. During all this time he was steadily working at the theory of tuning. He eagerly studied everything that had been published upon the subject, and his own talent and thorough knowledge of the theory of music soon led him to adopt a better and more scientific system of tuning than that generally in use. A circumstance now occurred which was the turning point of his fortune. One of the professors of the Conservatoire having heard of the skill of the blind tuner, sent for him and showed him two pianos which he had in his apartment. They were of different construction, and from different makers. It was important that they should be in exact accord, and none of the numerous tuners who had attempted the task had been able to succeed. Montal said he would make an attempt. He first carefully examined the differences in the construction, and making allowance for them, set to work in a scientific manner, and the result of his tuning was a perfect success. He was now patronised by the other members of the Conservatoire, and soon was employed by some of the leading professional musicians of Paris, by whose recommendation alone his fame as a tuner rapidly increased. In 1832 he gave a course of lectures. He began on a small scale to repair and to make pianos. This was the commencement of the well-known manufactory of which he was long the head."

This is only one out of the many stories one reads of what perseverance and genius can accomplish. Genius is the very power of abstraction, say some philosophers. There is an interesting book by Mr. Johns, the chaplain of the Blind School of St. George's-in-the-Fields, which gives the usual short biographies of Hubner, Saunderson, John Metcalfe, and others, with extraordinary instances of perception, but these are, after all, exceptional. The book also contains an interesting account of the education and mental characteristics of the blind, but the result seems, as far as a mere reader with but little experience can form an opinion, to leave an impression of aroused instinct and cultivated memory, rather than of that completer education of the reasoning powers at which the American systems aim.

It is not only among the blind that a different theory of education is daily gaining ground; the same influences seem to be reaching different necessities, and to be working, let us hope, for much ultimate good.

There is a book by a blind biographer, called Wilson, in which he describes his own experience when he was sent, some seventy years ago, to an asylum in Belfast, where he was taught upholstery work, and given a little education. "Although my pecuniary circumstances were not much improved," he says, "I now experienced a greater share of happiness than I had ever enjoyed before. One of the children generally read to me while I was at work. I improved my mind while labouring for my support; time glided pleasantly away, no room being left for idle speculations or

gloomy forebodings." These few words seem to tell the whole story. But although the systems have certainly improved since those days, perhaps even a little less enterprise might have been found desirable.




Dr. Armitage says, "The usual plan hitherto has been for some one who is in comparative ignorance of what has been done by others, to start a new system, which is taken up by philanthropists. Subscriptions are raised, and the Babel of systems is increased by one more. In this way it has come to pass that the Bible has already been printed in English in five different systems, while there is scarcely any other standard work published. Another evil is that the blind have to learn to read the character in favour at the institution where they happen to have received their education, and if they are to obtain the benefit of the few books which have been embossed, they must learn two or three fresh systems, and perhaps discard altogether the one which has taken them years to acquire."

He answers very pertinently the objections which have been made to the use of a special character for the blind, which would perhaps at first seem to be a mistake, as tending to make a still greater separation between those who have and those who have not sight. This is a question, he says, which must be settled, not for, but by the blind for themselves; a council of blind gentlemen has been formed for determining this and other important questions. They have decided, on the whole, in favour of a special type. "Where the difficulty lies between a character, in which the blind man requires and can receive assistance, and one which is so simple that he can read it by himself, there ought to be no doubt as to the choice."

Lucas, Frere, Moon, and Braille seem to be the types usually employed.

"It is much to be regretted," says my authority, "that the same arbitrary signs used by Lucas, Frere, and Moon stand for different letters, —, for instance, represents *s* in Lucas, *n* in Frere, and *t* in Moon; \ means severally *f*, *d*, and *r*, in the three systems; \mathcal{D} , *p*, *m*, *d*; \mathcal{U} , *n*, *l*, *u*; \mathcal{O} , *m*, *p*, *w*; and so on, to the utter distraction of the unfortunate students." M. Louis Braille, a pupil of the Institut des Jeunes Aveugles, invented a system which is now being received into more universal favour; it has the great advantage of being easily written by the blind themselves; it answers for musical notation, as well as for the letters of the alphabet.

I have before me a page of miscellaneous dots from Braille's different alphabets:—

	Do.	Re.	Mi.	Fa.	Sol.	La.	Si.
	⠠	⠡	⠢	⠣	⠤	⠥	⠦
\mathcal{D} or 	⠠	⠡	⠢	⠣	⠤	⠥	⠦
\mathcal{O} or 	⠠	⠡	⠢	⠣	⠤	⠥	⠦

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
•	•	••	••	•	••	••	••	•	••
K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
•	•	••	••	•	••	••	••	•	••
•	•	•	•	•	•	••	•	•	•

A very few moments' attention will suggest a meaning. These signs represent something that no signs or annotations could give if those who mark and those who read had not some mutual understanding by which one human being can express and put on record some of those realities that charm the bitterness of life away. The music through which we pass on our way is as surely as real an expression to some as the influence of nature to others. Whatever may come, whatever silence may fall hereafter, these things will have been. Mozart, with wistful sympathies, will have called to us, melting, irresistible; Mendelssohn's human voice will have reached our hearts; Spohr's hymns of hope and wonder will have soared heavenwards; Beethoven's waves of sound will have flowed in their mystic tides, sweeping how many shores and distant arid sands, bearing life to what lonely places.

The College at Norwood stands high upon a hill, with a whole world of green, of villas, and shrubberies, and cultivated fields, and other signs of life dazzling round about. The windows of the large pupil-room in the College look due west, and when we were last there the sky was all saffron in the sunset, bare trees cut black upon the blaze; the valley was over-flooded with the light, the hill-side and big room and the faces all shone sadly, brightly strange in the winter light. A man sat at the piano, striking the notes with a sympathetic hand, and listening attentively to the voices ranged on either side; as the sunset faded, the music did not cease. It was Mendelssohn again—one of his four-part songs—admirably given, in exquisite tune. Some one lit the gas for the use of those who were listening to the music, not for those who made it, and who sang so admirably, with such clearness and precision, that, as my companion said, it would be impertinent to praise what was so good. And so the voices sang on to us, striking notes as true and sweet and unfaltering as those of the wondrous violin itself.

The Hand of Ethelberta.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

KNOLLSEA—AN ORNAMENTAL VILLA.



ER energies collected and fermented anew by the results of the vigil, Ethelberta left town for Knollsea, where she joined Picotee the same evening. Picotee produced a letter, which had been addressed to her sister at their London residence, but was not received by her there, Mrs. Chickereel having forwarded it to Knollsea the day before Ethelberta arrived in town.

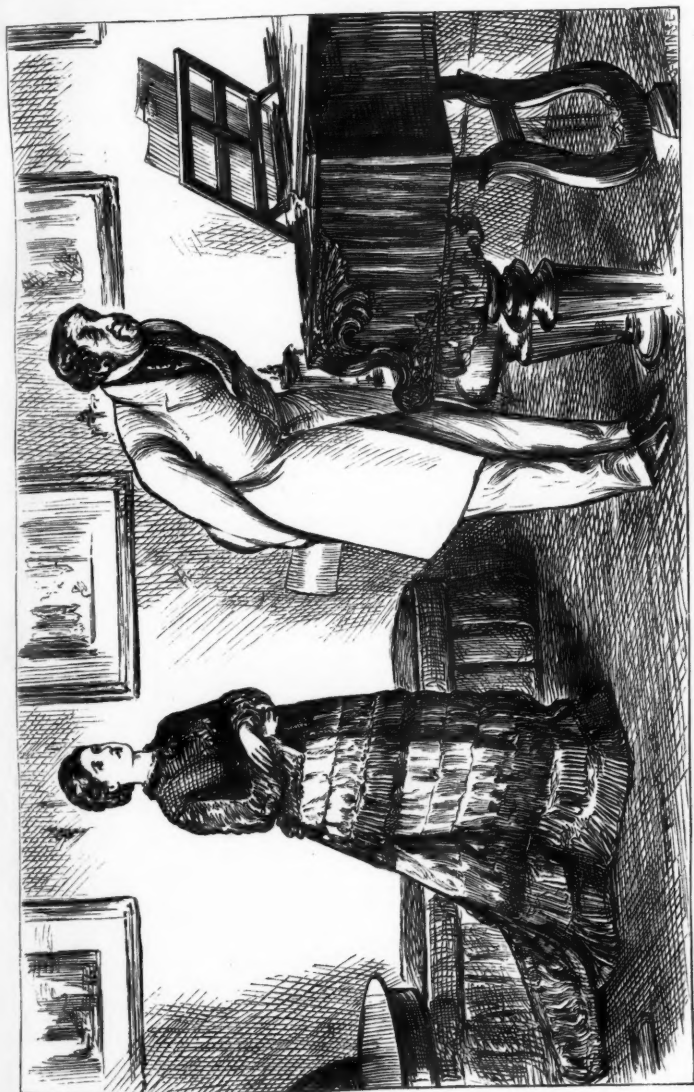
The crinkled writing, in character like the coast-line of Tierra del Fuego, was becoming familiar by this time. While reading the note she informed Picotee, between a quick breath and a rustle of frills, that it

was from Lord Mountclere, who wrote on the subject of calling to see her, suggesting a day in the following week. "Now, Picotee," she continued, "we shall have to receive him, and make the most of him, for I have altered my plans since I was last in Knollsea."

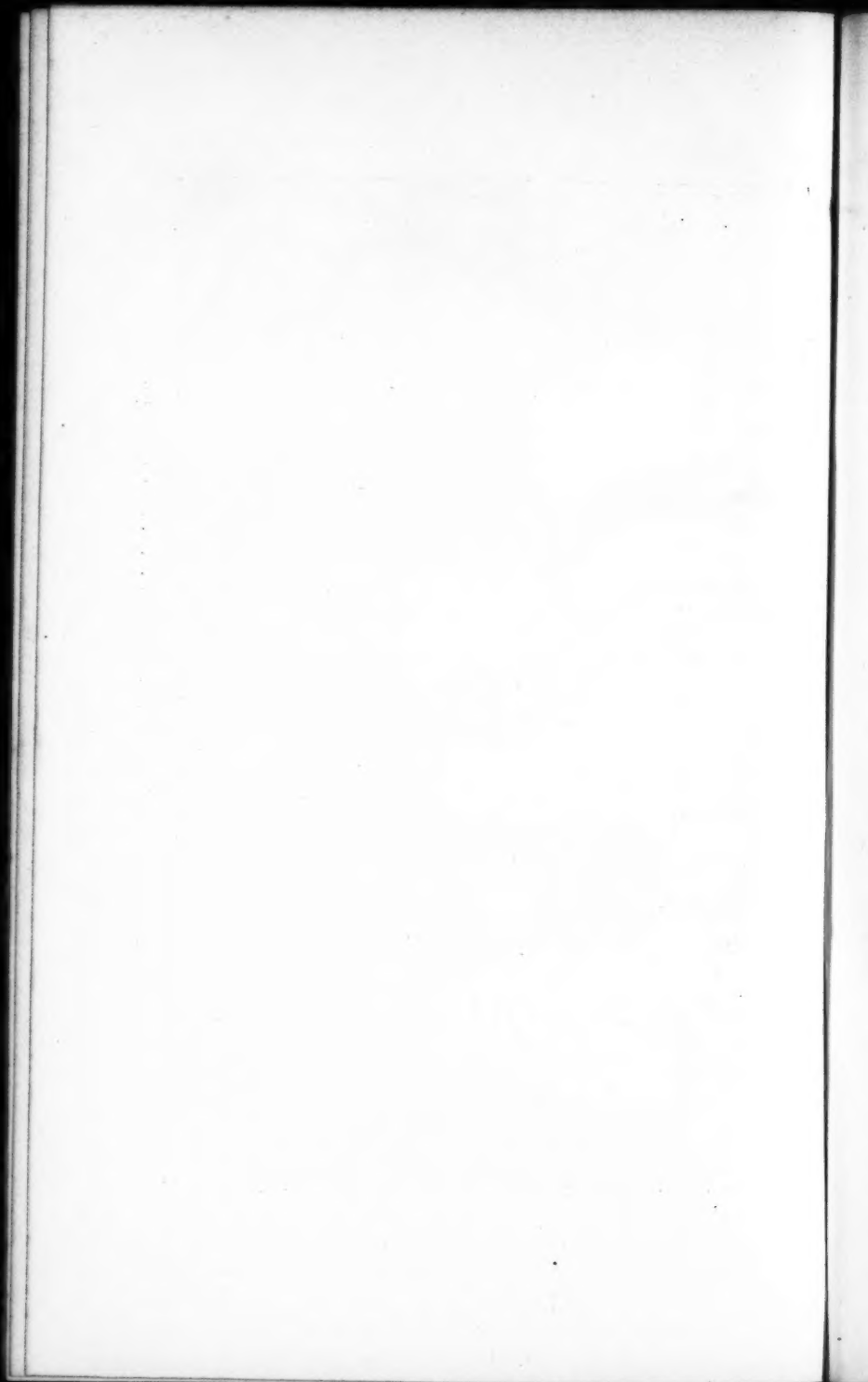
"Altered them again? What are you going to be now—not a poor person after all?"

"Indeed not. And so I turn and turn. Can you imagine what Lord Mountclere is coming for? But don't say what you think. Before I reply to this letter we must go into new lodgings, to give them as our address. The first thing to-morrow morning we must look for the gayest house we can find, and Captain Flower and this little cabin of his must be things we have never known."

The next day after breakfast they accordingly sallied forth. Knollsea had recently begun to attract notice in the world. It had this year undergone visitations from a score of professional gentlemen and their wives, a minor canon, three marine painters, seven young ladies with books in their hands, and nine-and-thirty babies. Hence a few lodging-houses, of a dash and pretentiousness far beyond the mark of the



"IN THE WRITING OF THE COMPOSER," OBSERVED LORD MOUNTCLEMENT WITH INTEREST.



old cottages which formed the original substance of the village, had been erected to meet the wants of such as these. To a building of this class Ethelberta bent her steps, and the crush of the season having now departed in the persons of three-quarters of the above-named visitors, who went away by a gig, a van, and a couple of waggonettes one morning, she found no difficulty in arranging for a red and yellow streaked villa, which was so bright and glowing that the sun seemed to be shining upon it even on a cloudy day, and the ruddiest native looked pale when standing by its walls. It was not without regret that she renounced the sailor's pretty cottage for this porticoed and balconied dwelling; but her lines were laid down clearly at last, and thither they removed forthwith. From this bran-new house did Ethelberta pen the letter naming the time at which she would be pleased to see Lord Mountclere.

When the hour drew nigh enormous force of will was required to keep her perturbation down. She had not distinctly told Picotee of the object of the viscount's visit, but Picotee guessed nearly enough. Ethelberta was upon the whole better pleased that the initiative had again come from him than she would have felt if the first step in the new campaign had been her sending the explanatory letter, as intended and promised. She had thought almost directly after the interview at Rouen that to enlighten him by writing a confession in cold blood, according to her first intention, would be little less awkward for her in the method of telling than in the facts to be told.

So the last hair was arranged, and the last fold adjusted, and she sat down to await a new page of her history. Picotee sat with her, under orders to go into the next room when Lord Mountclere should call; and Ethelberta determined to waste no time, directly he began to make advances, in clearing up the phenomena of her existence to him; to the end that no fact which, in the event of his taking her to wife, could be used against her as an example of concealment, might remain unrelated. The collapse of his attachment under the test might, however, form the grand climax of such a play as this.

The day was rather cold for the season, and Ethelberta sat by a fire; but the windows were open, and Picotee was amusing herself on the balcony outside. The hour struck: Ethelberta fancied she could hear the wheels of a carriage creeping up the steep ascent which led to the drive before the door.

"Is it he?" she said, quickly.

"No," said Picotee, whose indifference contrasted strangely with the restlessness of her who was usually the coolest. "It is a man shaking down apples in the garden over the wall."

They lingered on till some three or four minutes had gone by.

"Surely that's a carriage?" said Ethelberta then.

"I think it is," said Picotee outside, stretching her neck forward as far as she could. "No, it is the men on the beach dragging up their boats; they expect wind to-night."

"How wearisome! Picotee, you may as well come inside; if he means to call he will; but he ought to have been here by this time."

It was only once more, and that some time later, that she again said, "Listen!"

"That's not the noise of a carriage; it is the fizz of a rocket. The coastguardsmen are practising the life-apparatus to-day, to be ready for the autumn wrecks."

"Ah!" said Ethelberta, her face clearing up. Hers had not been a sweetheart's impatience, but her mood had intensified during these minutes of suspense to a harassing mistrust of her man-compelling power, which was, if that were possible, more gloomy than disappointed love. "I know now where he is. That operation with the cradle-apparatus is very interesting, and he is stopping to see it. . . . But I shall not wait indoors much longer, whatever he may be stopping to see. It is very unaccountable, and vexing, after moving into this new house too. We were much more comfortable in the old one. In keeping any previous appointment in which I have been concerned he has been ridiculously early."

"Shall I run round?" said Picotee. "And if he is not watching them we will go out."

"Very well," said her sister.

The time of Picotee's absence seemed an age. Ethelberta heard the roar of another rocket, and still Picotee did not return. "What can the girl be thinking of?" she thought. . . . "What a half-and-half policy mine has been! Thinking of marrying for position, and yet not making it my rigid plan to secure the man the first moment that he made his offer. So I lose the comfort of having a soul above worldliness, and my compensation for not having it likewise!" A minute or two more, and in came Picotee.

"What has kept you so long—and how excited you look!" said Ethelberta.

"I thought I would stay a little while, as I had never seen a rocket-apparatus," said Picotee, faintly and strangely.

"But is he there?" asked her sister impatiently.

"Yes—he was. He's gone now!"

"Lord Mountclere?"

"No. There is no old man there at all. Mr. Julian was there."

A little "Ah!" came from Ethelberta, like a note from a storm-bird at night. She turned round and went into the back room. "Is Mr. Julian going to call here?" she inquired, coming forward again.

"No—he's gone by the steamboat. He was only passing through on his way to Sandbourne, where he is gone to settle a small business relating to his father's affairs. He was not in Knollsea ten minutes, owing to something which detained him on the way."

"Did he inquire for me?"

"No. And only think, Ethelberta—such a remarkable thing has

happened, though I nearly forgot to tell you. He says that coming along the road he was overtaken by a carriage, and when it had just passed him one of the horses shied, pushed the other down a slope, and overturned the carriage. One wheel came off and trundled to the bottom of the hill by itself. Christopher of course ran up, and helped out of the carriage an old gentleman—now do you know what's likely?"

"It was Lord Mountclere. I am glad that's the cause," said Ethelberta involuntarily.

"I imagined you would suppose it to be Lord Mountclere. But Mr. Julian did not know the gentleman, and said nothing about who he might be."

"Did he describe him?"

"Not much—just a little."

"Well?"

"He said he was a sly old dog apparently, to hear how he swore in whispers. This affair is what made Mr. Julian so late that he had no time to call here. Lord Mountclere's ankle—if it was Lord Mountclere—was badly sprained. But the servants were not injured, beyond a scratch on the coachman's face. Then they got another carriage and drove at once back again. It must be he, or else why is he not come? It is a pity, too, that Mr. Julian was hindered by this, so that there was no opportunity for him to bide a bit in Knollsea."

Ethelberta was not disposed to believe that Christopher would have called, had time favoured him to the utmost. Between himself and her there was that kind of division which is more insurmountable than enmity; for estrangements produced by good judgment will last when those of feeling break down in smiles. Not the lovers who part in passion, but the lovers who part in friendship, are those who most frequently part for ever.

"Did you tell Mr. Julian that the injured gentleman was possibly Lord Mountclere, and that he was coming here?" said Ethelberta.

"I made no remark at all—I did not think of him till afterwards."

The inquiry was hardly necessary, for Picotee's words would dry away like a brook in the sands when she held conversation with Christopher.

As they had anticipated, the sufferer was no other than their intending visitor. Next morning there was a note explaining the accident, and expressing its writer's suffering from the cruel delay as greater than that from the swollen ankle, which was progressing favourably.

Nothing further was heard of Lord Mountclere for more than a week, when she received another letter, which put an end to her season of relaxation, and once more braced her to the contest. This epistle was very nicely written, and in point of correctness, propriety, and gravity, might have come from the quill of a bishop. Herein the old nobleman gave a further description of the accident, but the main business of the communication was to ask her if, since he was not as yet

very active, she would come to Lychworth Court and delight himself and a small group of friends who were visiting there.

She pondered over the letter as she walked by the shore that day, and after some hesitation decided to go.

CHAPTER XL.

LYCHWORTH COURT.

It was on a dull, stagnant, noiseless afternoon of autumn that Ethelberta first crossed the threshold of Lychworth Court. The daylight was so lowered by the impervious roof of cloud overhead that it scarcely reached further into Lord Mountclere's entrance-hall than to the eplays of the windows, even but an hour or two after midday; and indoors the glitter of the fire reflected itself from the very panes, so inconsiderable were the opposing rays.

Lychworth Court, in its main part, had not been standing more than a hundred years. At that date the weakened portions of the original mediæval structure were pulled down and cleared away, old jambs being carried off for rick-staddles, and the foliated timbers of the hall roof making themselves useful as fancy chairs in the summer-houses of rising inns. A new block of masonry was built up from the ground of such height and lordliness that the remnant of the old pile left standing became as a mere cup-bearer and culinary menial thereto. The rooms in this old fragment, which had in times past been considered sufficiently dignified for dining-hall, withdrawing-room, and so on, were now reckoned barely high enough for sculleries, servants' hall, and laundries, the whole of which were arranged therein.

The modern portion had been planned with such a total disregard of association, that the very rudeness of the contrast gave an interest to the mass which it might have wanted had perfect harmony been attempted between the old nucleus and its adjuncts, a probable result if the enlargement had taken place later on in time. The issue was that the hooded windows, simple string-courses, and random masonry of the Gothic workman stood elbow to elbow with the equal-spaced ashlar, architraves, and fasciæ of the Classic addition, each telling its distinct tale as to stage of thought and domestic habit without any of those artifices of blending or restoration by which the seeker for history in stones will be utterly hoodwinked in time to come.

To the left of the door and vestibule which Ethelberta passed through rose the principal staircase, constructed of a freestone so milkwhite and delicately moulded as to be easily mistaken in the lamp-light for biscuit-ware. Who, unacquainted with the secrets of geometrical construction, could imagine that, hanging so airily there, to all appearance supported on nothing, were twenty or more tons dead weight of stone, that would have made a prison for an elephant if so arranged? The art

which produced this illusion was questionable, but its success was undoubted. "How lovely!" said Ethelberta, as she looked at the fairy ascent. "His staircase alone is worth my hand!"

Passing along by the colonnade, which partly fenced the staircase from the visitor, the saloon was reached, an apartment forming a double cube. About the left-hand end of this were grouped the drawing-rooms and library; while on the right was the dining-hall, with billiard, smoking, and gun-rooms in mysterious remoteness beyond.

Without attempting to trace an analogy between a man and his mansion it may be stated that everything here, though so dignified and magnificent, was not conceived in quite the true and eternal spirit of art. It was a house in which Pugin would have torn his hair. Those massive blocks of red-veined marble lining the hall—emulating in their surface-glitter the *Escalier de Marbre* at Versailles—were cunning imitations in paint and plaster by workmen brought from afar for the purpose, at a prodigious expense, by the present viscount's father, and recently repaired and re-varnished. The dark green columns and pilasters corresponding were brick at the core. Nay, the external walls, apparently of massive and solid freestone, were only veneered with that material, being, like the pillars, of brick within.

To a stone mask worn by a brick face a story naturally appertained—one which has since seen service in other quarters. When the vast addition had just been completed King George visited Lychworth. Its owner pointed out the features of his grand architectural attempt, and waited for commendation.

"Brick, brick, brick," said the king.

The Georgian Lord Mountclere blushed faintly, albeit to his very poll, and said nothing more about his house that day. When the king was gone he sent frantically for the craftsmen recently dismissed, and soon the green lawns became again the colour of a Nine-Elms cement wharf. Thin freestone slabs were affixed to the whole series of fronts by copper cramps and dowels, each one of substance sufficient to have furnished a poor boy's pocket with pennies for a month, till not a speck of the original surface remained, and the edifice shone in all the grandeur of massive masonry that was not massive at all. But who remembered this save the builder and his crew? and as long as nobody knew the truth, pretence looked just as well.

What was honest in Lychworth Court was that portion of the original edifice which still remained, now degraded to subservient uses. Where the sturdy Mountclere of the White Rose faction had spread his knees over the brands when the place was a castle and not a court, the still-room maid now simmered her preserves; and where Elizabethan mothers and daughters of that noble line had tapestried the love-scenes of Isaac and Jacob, boots and shoes were now cleaned and coals stowed away.

Lord Mountclere had so far recovered from the sprain as to be

nominally quite well, under pressure of a wish to receive guests. The sprain had in one sense served him excellently. He had now a reason, apart from that of years, for walking with his stick, and took care to let the reason be frequently known. To-day he entertained a larger number of persons than had been assembled within his walls for a great length of time.

Until after dinner Ethelberta felt as if she were staying at an hotel. Few of the people whom she had met at the meeting of the Imperial Association greeted her here. The viscount's brother was not present, but Sir Cyril Blandsbury and his wife were there, a lively pair of persons, entertaining as actors, and friendly as dogs. Beyond these all the faces and figures were new to her, though they were handsome and dashing enough to satisfy a court-clothier. Ethelberta, in a dress sloped about as high over the shoulder as would have drawn approval from Vandyck, and expostulation from Lely, thawed and thawed each friend who came near her, and sent him or her away smiling; yet she felt a little surprise. She had seldom visited at a country house, and knew little of the ordinary composition of a group of visitors within its walls; but the present assemblage seemed to want much of that old-fashioned stability and quaint monumental dignity she had expected to find under this historical roof. Nobody of her entertainer's own rank appeared. Not a single clergyman was there. A tendency to talk Walpolean scandal about foreign courts was particularly manifest. And although tropical travellers, Indian officers and their wives, courteous exiles, and descendants of Irish kings, were infinitely more pleasant than Lord Mountclere's landed neighbours would probably have been, to such a cosmopolite as Ethelberta a calm old Tory company would have given a greater treat. They would have struck as gratefully upon her senses as sylvan scenery after crags and cliffs, or silence after the roar of a cataract.

It was evening, and all these personages at Lychworth Court were merry, snug, and warm within its walls. Dinner-time had passed, and everything had gone on well, when Mrs. Tara O'Fanagan, who had a gold-clamped tooth, which shone every now and then, asked Ethelberta if she would amuse them by telling a story, since no one present, except Lord Mountclere, had ever heard one from her lips.

Seeing that Ethelberta had been working at that art as a profession, it can hardly be said that the question was conceived with tact, though it was put with grace. Lord Mountclere evidently thought it objectionable, for he looked unhappy. To only one person in the brilliant room did the request appear as a happy accident, and that was to Ethelberta herself. Her honesty was always making war upon her manœuvres, and shattering their delicate meshes, to her great inconvenience and delay. Thus there arose those devious impulses and tangential flights which spoil the works of every would-be schemer who instead of being wholly machine is half heart. One of these now was to show herself as she really was, not only to Lord Mountclere, but to his

friends assembled, whom, in her ignorance, she respected more than they deserved; and so get rid of that self-reproach which had by this time reached a morbid pitch, through her over-sensitiveness to a situation in which a large majority of women and men would have seen no falseness.

Full of this curious intention, she quietly assented to the request, laughingly bade them put themselves in listening order, and began.

"An old story will suit us," said two or three. "We have never heard one."

"No: it shall be quite new," she replied. "One not yet made public; though it soon will be."

The narrative began by introducing to their notice a girl of the poorest and meanest parentage, the daughter of a serving-man, and the fifth of ten children. She graphically recounted, as if they were her own, the strange dreams and ambitious longings of this child when young, her attempts to acquire education, partial failures, partial successes, and constant struggles; instancing how, on one of these occasions, the girl concealed herself in a cupboard under the bookcases of the library belonging to the mansion in which her father was in service as footman, and having taken with her there, like a young Fawkes, matches and a halfpenny candle, was going to sit up all night reading when the family had retired, until her father discovered and prevented her scheme. Then followed her experiences as nursery-governess, her evening lessons under self-selected masters, and her ultimate rise to a higher grade among the teaching sisterhood. Next came another epoch. To the mansion in which she was engaged returned a truant son, between whom and the heroine an attachment sprang up. The master of the house was an ambitious gentleman just knighted, who perceiving the state of their hearts, harshly dismissed the homeless governess, and rated the son, the consequence being that the youthful pair resolved to marry secretly, and carried their resolution into effect. The runaway journey came next, and then a moving description of the death of the young husband, and the terror of his bride.

The guests began to look perplexed, and one or two exchanged whispers. This was not at all the kind of story that they had expected; it was quite different from her usual utterances, the nature of which they knew by report. Ethelberta kept her eye upon Lord Mountclere. Soon, to her amazement, there was that in his face which told her that he knew the story and its heroine quite well. When she delivered the sentence ending with the professedly fictitious words: "I thus was reduced to great distress, and vainly cast about me for directions what to do," Lord Mountclere's manner became so excited and anxious that it acted reciprocally upon Ethelberta: her voice trembled, she moved her lips but uttered nothing. To bring the story up to the date of that very evening had been her intent, but it was beyond her power. The spell was broken; she blushed with distress and turned away.

Though every one saw that she had broken down, none of them

appeared to know the reason why, or to have the clue to her performance. Fortunately Lord Mountclere came to her aid.

"Let the first part end here," he said, rising and approaching her. "We have been well-entertained so far. I could scarcely believe that the story I was listening to was utterly an invention, so vividly does Mrs. Petherwin bring the scenes before our eyes. She must now be exhausted: we will have the remainder to-morrow."

They all agreed that this was well, and soon after fell into groups, and dispersed about the rooms. When everybody's attention was thus occupied Lord Mountclere whispered to Ethelberta tremulously, "Don't tell more: you think too much of them: they are no better than you. Will you meet me in the little winter-garden two minutes hence? Pass through that door, and along the glass-passage." He himself left the room by an opposite door.

She had not set three steps in the warm snug octagon of glass and plants when he appeared on the other side.

"You knew it all before!" she said, looking keenly at him. "Who told you, and how long have you known it?"

"Before yesterday, or last week," said Lord Mountclere. "Even before we met in France. Why are you so surprised?"

Ethelberta had been surprised, and very greatly, to find him, as it were, secreted in the very rear of her position. That nothing she could tell was new to him was a good deal to think of, but it was little beside the recollection that he had actually made his first declaration in the face of that knowledge of her, which she had supposed so fatal to all matrimonial ambition.

"And now only one point remains to be settled," he said, taking her hand. "You promised at Rouen that at our next interview you would honour me with a decisive reply—one to make me happy for ever."

"But my father and friends?" said she.

"Are nothing to be concerned about. Modern developments have shaken up the classes like peas in a hopper. An annuity, and a comfortable cottage—"

"My brothers are workmen."

"Manufacture is the single vocation in which a man's prospects may be said to be illimitable. Hee, hee—they may buy me up before they die! And now what stands in the way? It would take fifty alliances with fifty families so little disreputable as yours, darling, to drag mine down."

Ethelberta had anticipated the scene, and settled her course; what had to be said and done here was mere routine; yet she had been unable to go straight to the assent required. However, after these words of self-depreciation, which were let fall apparently as much for her own future ease of conscience as for his present warning, she made no more ado.

"I shall think it a great honour to be your wife," she said, simply.

CHAPTER XLII.

KNOLLSEA.—MELCHESTER.

THE year was now moving on apace, but Ethelberta and Picotee chose to remain at Knollsea, in the brilliant variegated brick and stone villa to which they had removed in order to be in keeping with their ascending fortunes. Autumn had begun to make itself felt and seen in bolder and less subtle ways than at first. In the morning now, on coming downstairs, in place of a yellowish-green leaf or two lying in a corner of the lowest step, which had been the only previous symptoms around the house, she saw dozens of them playing at corkscrews in the wind, directly the door was opened. Beyond, towards the sea, the slopes and scarps that had been muffled with a thick robe of cliff herbage, were showing their chill grey substance through the withered verdure, like the background of velvet whence the pile has been fretted away. Unexpected breezes broomed and rasped the smooth bay in evanescent patches of stippled shade, and, besides the small boats, the ponderous lighters used in shipping stone were hauled up the beach in anticipation of the equinoctial attack.

A few days after Ethelberta's reception at Lychworth, an improved stanhope, driven by Lord Mountclere himself, climbed up the hill until it was opposite her door. A few notes from a piano softly played reached his ear as he descended from his place; on being shown in to his betrothed, he could perceive that she had just left the instrument. Moreover, a tear was visible in her eye when she came near him.

They discoursed for several minutes in the manner natural between a defenceless young widow and an old widower in Lord Mountclere's position to whom she was engaged—a great deal of formal considerateness making itself visible on her part, and of extreme tenderness on his. While thus occupied, he turned to the piano, and casually glanced at a piece of music lying open upon it. Some words of writing at the top expressed that it was the composer's original copy, presented by him, Christopher Julian, to the author of the song. Seeing that he noticed the sheet somewhat lengthily, Ethelberta remarked that it had been an offering made to her a long time ago—a melody written to one of her own poems.

"In the writing of the composer," observed Lord Mountclere, with interest. "An offering from the musician himself—very gratifying and touching. Mr. Christopher Julian is the name I see upon it, I believe? I knew his father, Dr. Julian—a Sandbourne man, if I recollect."

"Yes," said Ethelberta, placidly. But it was really with an effort. The song was the identical one which Christopher sent up to her from Sandbourne when the fire of her hope burnt high for less material ends; and the discovery of the sheet among her music that day had started eddies of emotion for some time checked.

"I am sorry you have been grieved," said Lord Mountclere, with gloomy restlessness.

"Grieved?" said Ethelberta.

"Did I not see a tear there? or did my eyes deceive me?"

"You might have seen one."

"Ah! a tear, and a song. I naturally think——"

"You naturally think that a woman who cries over a man's gift must be in love with the giver?" Ethelberta looked him serenely in the face.

Lord Mountclere's jealous suspicions were considerably shaken.

"Not at all," he said hastily, as if ashamed. "One who cries over a song is much affected by its sentiment."

"Do you expect authors to cry over their own words?" she inquired, merging defence in attack. "I am afraid they don't often do that."

"You would make me uneasy!"

"On the contrary, I would reassure you. Are you not still doubting?" she asked with a pleasant smile.

"I cannot doubt you!"

"Swear, like a faithful knight."

"I swear, my fairy, my flower!"

After this the old man appeared to be pondering; indeed, his thoughts could hardly be said to be present when he uttered the words. For though the tabernacle was getting shaky by reason of years and merry living, so that what was going on inside might often be guessed without by the movement of the hangings, as in a puppet-show with worn canvas, he could be quiet enough when scheming any plot of particular neatness, which had less emotion than impishness in it. Such an innocent amusement he was pondering now.

Before leaving her, he asked if she would accompany him to a morning instrumental concert at Melchester, which was to take place in the course of that week for the benefit of some local institution.

"Melchester," she repeated faintly, and observed him as searchingly as it was possible to do without exposing herself to a raking fire in return. Could he know that Christopher was living there, and was this said in prolongation of his recent suspicion? But Lord Mountclere's face gave no sign.

"You forget one fatal objection," said she; "the secrecy in which it is imperative that the engagement between us should be kept."

"I am not known in Melchester without my carriage; nor are you."

"We may be known by somebody on the road."

"Then let it be arranged in this way. I will not call here to take you up, but will meet you at the station at Anglebury; and we can go on together by train without notice. Surely there can be no objection to that? It would be mere prudishness to object, since we are to become one so shortly." He spoke a little impatiently. It was plain that he particularly wanted her to go to Melchester.

"I merely meant that there was a chance of discovery in our going out together. And discovery means no marriage." She was pale now, and sick at heart, for it seemed that the viscount must be aware that Christopher dwelt at that place, and was about to test her concerning him.

"Why does it mean no marriage?" said he.

"My father might, and almost certainly would, object to it. Although he cannot control me he might entreat me."

"Why would he object?" said Lord Mountclere, uneasily, and somewhat haughtily.

"I don't know."

"But you will be my wife—say again that you will."

"I will."

He breathed. "He will not object—he-hee!" he said. "Oh, no—I think you will be mine now."

"I have said so. But look to me all the same."

"You malign yourself, dear one. But you will meet me at Anglebury, as I wish, and go on to Melchester with me?"

"I shall be pleased to—if my sister may accompany me."

"Ah—your sister. Yes, of course."

They settled the time of the journey, and when the visit had been stretched out as long as it reasonably could be with propriety, Lord Mountclere took his leave.

When he was again seated on the driving-phaeton which he had brought that day, Lord Mountclere looked gleeful, and shrewd enough in his own opinion to outwit Mephistopheles. As soon as they were ascending a hill, and he could find time to free his hand, he pulled off his glove, and drawing from his pocket a programme of the Melchester concert referred to, contemplated therein the name of one of the intended performers. The name was that of Mr. C. Julian. Replacing it again, he looked ahead, and some time after murmured with wily mirth, "An excellent test—a lucky thought!"

Nothing of importance transpired during the intervening days. At two o'clock on the appointed afternoon Ethelberta stepped from the train at Melchester with the viscount, who had met her as proposed; she was followed behind by Picotee. The concert was to be held at the Town-hall half-an-hour later. They entered a fly in waiting, and secure from recognition, were driven leisurely in that direction, Picotee silent and absorbed with her own thoughts.

"There's the cathedral," said Lord Mountclere humorously, as they caught a view of one of its towers through a street leading into the Close.

"Yes."

"It boasts of a very fine organ."

"Ah."

"And the organist is a clever young man,"

"Oh,"

Lord Mountclere paused a comma or two. "By the way, you may remember that he is the Mr. Julian who set your song to music!"

"I recollect it quite well." Her heart was horrified, and she thought Lord Mountclere must be sinking into dotage, which perhaps he was. But none of this reached her face.

They turned in the direction of the Hall, were set down, and entered.

The large assembly-room set apart for the concert was upstairs, and it was possible to enter it in two ways: by the large doorway in front of the landing, or by turning down a side passage leading to council-rooms and subsidiary apartments of small size, which were allotted to performers in any exhibition; thus they could enter from one of these directly upon the platform, without passing through the audience.

"Will you seat yourself here?" said Lord Mountclere, who, instead of entering by the direct door, had brought the young women round into this green-room, as it may be called. "You see we have come in privately enough; when the musicians arrive we can pass through behind them, and step down to our seats from the front."

The players could soon be heard tuning in the next room. Then one came through the passage-room where the three waited, and went in, then another, then another. Last of all came Julian.

Ethelberta sat facing the door, but Christopher, never in the least expecting her there, did not recognise her till he was quite inside. When he had really perceived her to be the one who had troubled his soul so many times and long, the blood in his face—never very much—passed off and left it, like the shade of a cloud. Between them stood a table covered with green baize, which, reflecting upwards a band of sunlight shining across the chamber, flung upon his already white features the virescent hues of death. The poor musician, whose person, much to his own inconvenience, constituted a complete breviary of the gentle emotions, looked as if he were going to fall down in a faint.

Ethelberta flung at Lord Mountclere a look which clipped him like pincers: he never forgot it as long as he lived.

"This is your pretty jealous scheme—I see it!" she hissed to him, and without being able to control herself went across to Julian.

But a slight gasp came from behind the door where Picotee had been sitting. Ethelberta and Lord Mountclere looked that way; and behold, Picotee had nearly swooned.

Ethelberta's show of passion went as quickly as it had come, for she felt that a splendid triumph had been put into her hands. "Now do you see the truth?" she whispered to Lord Mountclere without a drachm of feeling; pointing to Christopher and then to Picotee—as like as two snowdrops now.

"I do, I do," murmured the viscount hastily.

They both went forward to help Christopher in restoring the fragile Picotee: he had set himself to that task as suddenly as he possibly could to cover his own near approach to the same condition. Not much help

was required, the little girl's indisposition being quite momentary, and she sat up in the chair again.

"Are you better?" said Ethelberta to Christopher.

"Quite well—quite," he said, smiling faintly. "I am glad to see you. I must, I think, go into the next room now." He bowed and walked out awkwardly.

"Are you better, too?" she next said to Picotee.

"Quite well," said Picotee.

"You are quite sure you know between whom the love lies now—eh?" Ethelberta asked in a sarcastic whisper of Lord Mountclere.

"I am—beyond a doubt," murmured the anxious nobleman; he feared that look of hers, which was not less dominant than irresistible.

Some additional moments given to thought on the circumstances rendered Ethelberta still more indignant and intractable. She went out at the door by which they had entered, along the passage, and down the stairs. A shuffling footstep followed, but she did not turn her head. When they reached the bottom of the stairs the carriage had gone, their exit not being expected till two hours later. Ethelberta, nothing daunted, swept along the pavement and down the street in a turbulent prance, Lord Mountclere trotting behind with a jowl reduced to a mere nothing by his concern at the discourtesy into which he had been lured by jealous whisperings.

"My dearest—forgive me; I confess I doubted you—but I was beside myself," came to her ears from over her shoulder. But Ethelberta walked on as before.

Lord Mountclere sighed like a poet over a ledger. "An old man—who is not very old—naturally torments himself with fears of losing—no, no—it was an innocent jest of mine—you will forgive a joke—hee-hee?" he said again on getting no reply.

"You had no right to mistrust me!"

"I do not—you did not blench. You should have told me before that it was your sister and not yourself who was entangled with him."

"You brought me to Melchester on purpose to confront him."

"Yes, I did."

"Are you not ashamed?"

"I am satisfied. It is better to know the truth by any means than to die of suspense; better for us both—surely you see that?"

They had by this time got to the end of a long street, and into a deserted side road by which the station could be indirectly reached. Picotee appeared in the distance as a mere distracted speck of girlhood, following them because not knowing what else to do in her sickness of body and mind. Once out of sight here, Ethelberta began to cry.

"Ethelberta," said Lord Mountclere, in an agony of trouble, "don't be vexed. It was an inconsiderate trick—I own it. Do what you will, but do not desert me now! I could not bear it—you would kill me if you were to leave me. Anything, but be mine."

Ethelberta continued her way, and drying her eyes entered the station, where, on searching the time-tables, she found that there would be no train to Anglebury for the next two hours. Then more slowly she turned towards the town again, meeting Picotee, and keeping in her company.

Lord Mountclere gave up the chase, but as he wished to get into the town again, he followed in the same direction. When Ethelberta had proceeded as far as the Mitre Hotel, she turned towards it with her companion, and being shown to a room, the two sisters shut themselves in. Lord Mountclere paused and entered the Crown, the rival hotel to the Mitre, which stood on the opposite side of the way.

Having secluded himself in an apartment here, walked from window to window awhile, and made himself generally uncomfortable, he sat down to the writing materials on the table, and concocted a note :

"Crown Hotel.

"MY DEAR MRS. PETHERWIN,

"YOU do not mean to be so cruel as to break your plighted word to me? Remember, there is no love without much jealousy, and lovers are ever full of sighs and misgivings. I have owned to as much contrition as can reasonably be expected. I could not endure the suspicion that you loved another.

"Yours always,

"MOUNTCLERE."

This he sent, watching from the window its progress across the street. He waited anxiously for an answer, and waited long. It was nearly twenty minutes before he could hear a messenger approaching the door. Yes—she had actually sent a reply: he prized it as if it had been the first encouragement he had ever in his life received from woman:

"MY LORD," wrote Ethelberta,

"I AM not prepared at present to enter into the question of marriage at all. The incident which has occurred affords me every excuse for withdrawing my promise, since it was given under misapprehensions on a point that materially affects my happiness.

"E. PETHERWIN."

"Ho-ho-ho—Miss Hoity-toity!" said Lord Mountclere, trotting up and down. But, remembering it was her June against his November, this did not last long, and he frantically replied:

"My darling—I cannot release you—I must do anything to keep my treasure. Will you not see me for a few minutes, and let bygones go to the winds?"

Was ever a thrush so safe in a cherry-net before!

The messenger came back with the information that Mrs. Petherwin

had taken a walk to the Close, her companion only remaining at the hotel. There being nothing else left for the viscount to do, he put on his hat, and went out on foot in the same direction. He had not walked far when he saw Ethelberta moving slowly along the High Street before him.

Ethelberta was at this hour wandering without any fixed intention beyond that of consuming time. She was very wretched, and very indifferent: the former when thinking of her past, the latter when thinking of the days to come. While she walked thus, unconscious of the streets and their groups of other wayfarers, she saw Christopher emerge from a door not many paces in advance, and close it behind him: he stood for a moment on the step before descending into the road.

She could not, even had she wished it, easily check her progress without rendering the chance of his perceiving her still more certain. But she did not wish any such thing, and it made little difference, for he had already seen her in taking his survey round, and came down from the door to her side. It was impossible for anything formal to pass between them now.

"You are not at the concert, Mr. Julian?" she said. "I am glad to have a better opportunity of speaking to you, and of asking for your sister. Unfortunately there is not time for us to call upon her to-day."

"Thank you; but it makes no difference," said Julian, with somewhat sad reserve. "I will tell her I have met you: she is away from home just at present." And finding that Ethelberta did not rejoice immediately, he observed, "The assistant-organist has taken my place at the concert, as it was arranged he should do after the opening part. I am now going to the Cathedral for the afternoon service. You are going there too?"

"I thought of looking at the interior for a moment."

So they went on side by side, saying little; for it was a situation in which scarcely any appropriate thing could be spoken. Ethelberta was the less reluctant to walk in his company because of the provocation to skittishness that Lord Mountclere had given, a provocation which she still resented. But she was far from wishing to increase his jealousy; and yet this was what she was doing, Lord Mountclere being a perturbed witness of all that was passing now.

They turned the corner of the short street of connection which led under an archway to the Cathedral Close. Christopher seemed to warm up a little, and repeated the invitation. "You will come with your sister to see us before you leave?" he said. "We have tea at six."

"We shall have left Melchester before that time. I am now only waiting for the train."

"You two have not come all the way from Knollsea alone?"

"Part of the way," said Ethelberta, evasively.

"And going back alone?"

"No. Only for the last five miles. At least, that was the arrangement—I am not quite sure if it holds good."

"You don't wish me to see you safely in the train?"

"It is not necessary: thank you very much. We are well used to getting about the world alone, and from Melchester to Knollsea is no serious journey, late or early . . . Yet I think I ought, in honesty, to tell you that we are not entirely by ourselves in Melchester to-day."

"I remember. I saw your friend—relative—in the room at the Town-hall. It did not occur to my mind for the moment that he was any other than a stranger standing there."

"He is not a relative," she said, with perplexity. "I hardly know, Christopher, how to explain to you my position here to-day, because of some difficulties that have arisen since we have been in the town, which may alter it entirely. On that account I will be less frank with you than I should like to be, considering how long we have known each other. It would be wrong, however, if I were not to tell you that there has been a possibility of my marriage with him."

"The elderly gentleman?"

"Yes. And I came here to-day in his company, intending to return with him. But you shall know all soon. Picotee shall write to Faith."

"I always think the Cathedral looks better from this point than from the point usually chosen by artists," he said, with nervous quickness, directing her glance upwards to the silent structure, now misty and unrelieved by either high light or deep shade. "We get the grouping of the chapels and choir-aisles more clearly shown—and the whole culminates to a more perfect pyramid from this spot—do you think so?"

"Yes. I do."

A little further, and Christopher stopped to enter, when Ethelberta bade him farewell. "I thought at one time that our futures might have been different from what they are apparently becoming," he said then, regarding her as a stall-reader regards the brilliant book he cannot afford to buy. "But one gets weary of repining about that. I wish Picotee and yourself could see us oftener; I am as confirmed a bachelor now as Faith is an old maid. I wonder if—should the event you contemplate occur—you and he will visit us, or we shall ever visit you!"

Christopher was evidently imagining the elderly gentleman to be some retired farmer, or professional man already so intermixed with the metamorphic classes of society as not to be surprised or inconvenienced by her beginnings; one who wished to secure Ethelberta as an ornament to his parlour fire in a quiet spirit, and in no intoxicated mood regardless of issues. She could scarcely reply to his supposition; and the parting was what might have been predicated from a conversation so carefully controlled.

Ethelberta, as she had intended, now went on further, and entering the nave began to inspect the sallow monuments which lined the grizzled pile. She did not perceive amid the shadows an old gentleman who

had crept into the mouldy place as stealthily as a worm into a skull, and was keeping himself carefully beyond her observation. She continued to regard feature after feature till the choristers had filed in from the south side, and peals broke forth from the organ on the black oaken mass at the junction of nave and choir, shaking every cobweb in the dusky vaults, and Ethelberta's heart no less. She knew the fingers that were pressing out those rolling sounds, and knowing them, became absorbed in tracing their progress. To go towards the organ-loft was an act of unconsciousness, and she did not pause till she stood almost beneath it.

Ethelberta was awakened from vague imaginings by the close approach of the old gentleman alluded to, who spoke with a great deal of agitation.

"I have been trying to meet with you," said Lord Mountclere. "Come, let us be friends again!—Ethelberta, I must not lose you. You cannot mean that the engagement shall be broken off?" He was far too desirous to possess her at any price now to run a second risk of exasperating her, and forbore to make any allusion to the recent pantomime between herself and Christopher that he had beheld, though it might reasonably have filled him with dread and petulance.

"I do not mean anything beyond this," said she. "That I entirely withdraw from it on the faintest sign that you have not abandoned such miserable jealous proceedings as those you adopted to-day."

"I have quite abandoned them. Will you come a little further this way, and walk in the aisle? You do still agree to be mine?"

"If it gives you any pleasure, I do."

"Yes, yes. I implore that the marriage may be soon—very soon." The viscount spoke hastily, for the notes of the organ which were plunging into their ears ever and anon from the hands of his young rival seemed inconveniently and solemnly in the way of his suit.

"Well, my lord."

"Say in a few days?—it is the only thing that will satisfy me."

"I am absolutely indifferent as to the day. If it pleases you to have it early I am willing."

"Dare I ask that it may be this week?" said the delighted old man.

"I could not say that."

"But you can name the earliest day."

"I cannot now. We had better be going from here I think."

The Cathedral was filling with shadows, and cold breathings came round the piers, for it was November, and night very soon succeeds noon where noon is sobered to the pallor of eve. But the service was not yet over, and before quite leaving the building Ethelberta cast one other glance towards the organ, and thought of him behind it. At this moment her attention was arrested by the form of her sister Picotee, who came in at the north door, closed the lobby-wicket softly, and went lightly forwards to the choir. When within a few yards of it she paused by a pillar, and lingered there looking up at the organ as Ethelberta had done. No

sound was coming from the ponderous mass of tubes just then; but in a short space a whole crowd of tones spread from the instrument to accompany the words of a response. Picotee started at the burst of music as if taken in a dishonest action, and moved on in a manner intended to efface the lover's loiter of the preceding moments from her own consciousness no less than from other people's eyes.

"Do you see that?" said Ethelberta. "That little figure is my dearest sister. Could you but ensure a marriage between her and him she listens to, I would do anything you wish!"

"That is indeed a gracious promise," said Lord Mountclere. "And would you agree to what I asked just now?"

"Yes."

"When?" A gleeful spark accompanied this.

"As you requested."

"This week? The day after to-morrow?"

"If you will. But remember what lies on your side of the contract. I fancy I have given you in that a task beyond your powers."

"Well, darling, we are at one at last," said Lord Mountclere, rubbing his hand against his side. "And if my task is heavy, and I cannot guarantee the result, I can make it very probable. Marry me on Friday—the day after to-morrow, and I will do all that money and influence can effect to bring about their union."

"You solemnly promise? You will never cease to give me all the aid in your power until the thing is done?"

"I do solemnly promise—on the conditions named."

"Very good. You will have ensured my fulfilment of my promise before I can ensure yours; but I take your word."

"You will marry me on Friday! Give me your hand upon it."

She gave him her hand.

"Is it a covenant?" he asked.

"It is," said she.

Lord Mountclere warmed from surface to centre as if he had drunk of hippocras, and after holding her hand for some moments, raised it gently to his lips.

"Two days—and you are mine," he said.

"That I believe I never shall be."

"Never shall be? Why, darling?"

"I don't know. Some catastrophe will prevent it. I shall be dead, perhaps."

"You distress me. Ah,—you meant me—you meant that I should be dead, because you think I am old! But that is a mistake—I am not very old."

"I thought only of myself—nothing of you."

"Yes, I know. Dearest, it is dismal and chilling here—let us go."

Ethelberta mechanically moved with him, and felt there was no retreating now. In the meantime the young ladykin whom the solemn

vowing concerned had lingered round the choir-screen, as if fearing to enter, yet loth to go away. The service terminated, the heavy books were closed, doors were opened, and the feet of the few persons who had attended evensong began pattering down the paved alleys. Not wishing Picotee to know that the object of her secret excursion had been discovered, Ethelberta now stepped out of the west doorway with the viscount before Picotee had emerged from the other; and they walked along the path together until she overtook them.

"I fear it becomes necessary for me to stay in Melchester to-night," said Lord Mountclere. "I have a few matters to attend to here, as the result of our arrangements. But I will first accompany you as far as Anglebury, and see you safely into a carriage there that shall take you home. To-morrow I will drive to Knollsea, when we will make the final preparations."

Ethelberta would not have him go so far and back again, merely to attend upon her; hence they parted at the railway, with due and correct tenderness; and when the train had gone, Lord Mountclere returned into the town on the special business he had mentioned, for which there remained only the present evening and the following morning, if he were to call upon her in the afternoon of the next day—the day before the wedding—now so recklessly hastened on his part, and so coolly assented to on hers.

By the time that the two young people had started it was nearly dark. Some portions of the railway stretched through little copses and plantations where, the leaf-shedding season being now at its height, red and golden patches of fallen foliage lay on either side of the rails; and as the travellers passed, all these death-stricken bodies boiled up in the whirlwind created by the velocity, and were sent flying right and left of them in myriads, a clean fanned track being left behind.

Picotee was called from the observation of these phenomena by a remark from her sister: "Picotee, the marriage is to be very early indeed. It is to be the day after to-morrow—if it can. Nevertheless I don't believe in the fact—I cannot."

"Did you arrange it so? Nobody can make you marry so soon."

"I agreed to the day," murmured Ethelberta, languidly.

"How can it be? The gay dresses and the preparations and the people—how can they be collected in the time, Berta? And so much more of that will be required for a lord of the land than for a common man. Oh, I can't think it possible for a sister of mine to marry a lord."

"And yet it has been possible any time this last month or two, strange as it seems to you. . . . It is to be not only a plain, an unlordly wedding, without any lordly appliances, but a secret one—as secret as if I were some under-age heiress to an Indian fortune, and he a young man of nothing a year."

"Has Lord Mountclere said it must be so private? I suppose it is on account of his family."

"No. I say so; and it is on account of my family. Father might object to the wedding, I imagine, from what he once said; or he might be much disturbed about it; so I think it better that he and the rest should know nothing till all is over. You must dress again as my sister to-morrow, dear. Lord Mountclere is going to pay us an early visit to conclude necessary arrangements."

"Oh, the life as a lady at Lychworth Court! The flowers, the woods, the rooms, the pictures, the plate, and the jewels! Horses and carriages rattling and prancing, seneschals and pages, and footmen hopping up and hopping down. It will be glory then!"

"We might hire our father as one of my retainers, to increase it," said Ethelberta, drily.

Picotee's countenance fell. "How shall we manage all about that? 'Tis terrible, really!"

"The marriage granted, those things will right themselves by time and weight of circumstances. You take a wrong view in thinking of glories of that sort. My only hope is that my life will be quite private and simple, on account of my inferiority and Lord Mountclere's staidness. Such a splendid library as there is at Lychworth, Picotee—quartos, folios, history, verse, Elzevirs, Caxtons—all that has been done in literature from Moses down to Scott—with such companions I can do without all other sorts of happiness."

"And you will not go to town from Easter to Lammas-tide, as other noble ladies do?" asked the younger girl, rather disappointed at this aspect of a viscountess's life.

"I don't know."

"But you will give dinners, and travel, and go to see his friends, and have them to see you?"

"I don't know."

"Will you not be, then, as any other peeress; and, shall not I be as any other peeress's sister?"

"That, too, I do not know. All is mystery. Nor do I even know that the marriage will take place. I feel that it may not; and perhaps so much the better, since the man is a stranger to me. I know nothing whatever of his nature, and he knows nothing of mine."

CHAPTER XLII.

MELCHESTER—Continued.

THE commotion wrought in Julian's mind by the abrupt incursion of Ethelberta into his quiet sphere was thorough and protracted. The witchery of her presence he had grown strong enough to withstand in part; but her composed announcement that she had intended to marry another, and, as far as he could understand, was intending it still, added

a new chill to the old shade of disappointment which custom was day by day enabling him to endure. The whole interval during which he had produced those diapason blasts, heard with such inharmonious feelings by the three auditors outside the screen, his thoughts had wandered wider than his notes in conjectures on the character and position of the gentleman seen in Ethelberta's company. Owing to his assumption that Lord Mountclere was but a stranger who had accidentally come in at the side door, Christopher had barely cast a glance upon him, and the wide difference between the years of the viscount and those of his betrothed was not so particularly observed as to raise that point to an item in his objections now. Lord Mountclere was dressed with all the cunning that could be drawn from the metropolis by money and reiterated dissatisfaction; he prided himself on his upright carriage; his stick was so thin that the most malevolent could not insinuate that it was of any possible use in walking; his teeth had put on all the vigour and freshness of a second spring. Hence his look was the slowest of possible clocks in respect of his age, and his manner was equally as much in the rear of his appearance.

Christopher was now over five-and-twenty. He was getting so well-accustomed to the spectacle of a world passing him by and splashing him with its wheels that he wondered why he had ever minded it. His habit of dreaming instead of doing had led him up to a curious discovery. It is no new thing for a man to fathom profundities by indulging humours; the active, the rapid, the people of such splendid momentum that almost before they can see where they are they have got somewhere else, have been surprised to behold what results attend the lives of those whose usual plan for discharging their active labours has been that of postponing them indefinitely. Certainly, the acquisitions of the inactive are, usually, rather interesting from their quaintness than valuable for their brilliancy, and of such a sort was Christopher's. What he had learnt was that a woman who had once made a permanent impression upon a man cannot altogether deny him her image by denying him her company, and that by sedulously cultivating the acquaintance of this Creature of Contemplation she becomes to him almost a living soul. Hence a sublimated Ethelberta accompanied him everywhere—one who never teased him, eluded him, or disappointed him: when he smiled she smiled, when he was sad she sorrowed. He may be said to have become the literal duplicate of that whimsical unknown rhapsodist who wrote of his own similar situation —

By absence this good means I gain,
That I can catch her,
Where none can watch her,
In some close corner of my brain;
There I embrace and kiss her;
And so I both possess and miss her.

This frame of mind naturally induced an amazing abstraction in the

organist, never very vigilant at the best of times. He would stand and look fixedly at a frog in a shady pool, and never once think of batrachians, or pause by a green bank to split some tall blade of grass into filaments without removing it from its stalk, passing on ignorant that he had made a cat-o'-nine-tails of a graceful slip of vegetation. He would hear the cathedral clock strike one, and go the next minute to see what time it was. "I never seed such a man as Mr. Julian is," said the head blower. "He'll meet me anywhere out-of-doors, and never wink or nod. You'd hardly expect it. I don't find fault, but you'd hardly expect it, seeing how I play the same instrument as he do himself, and have done it for so many years longer than he. How I have indulged that man, too! If 'tis Pedals for two martel hours of practice I never complain; and he has plenty of vagaries. When 'tis hot summer weather there's nothing will do for him but Choir, Great, and Swell altogether, till yer face is in a vapour; and on a frosty winter night he'll keep me there while he tweedles upon the Twelfth and Sixteenth till my arms be scrambled for want of motion. And never speak a word out of doors." Somebody suggested that perhaps Christopher did not notice his coadjutor's presence in the street; and time proved to the organ-blower that the remark was just.

Whenever Christopher caught himself at these vacuous tricks he would be struck with admiration of Ethelberta's wisdom, foresight, and self-command, in refusing to wed such an incapable man: he felt that he ought to be thankful that a bright memory of her was not also denied to him, and resolved to be content with it as a possession, since it was as much of her as he could decently maintain.

Wrapped thus in a humorous sadness he passed the afternoon under notice, and in the evening went home to Faith, who still lived with him, and showed no sign of ever being likely to do otherwise. Their present place and mode of life suited her well. She revived at Melchester like an exotic sent home again. The leafy Close, the climbing but-tresses, the pondering ecclesiastics, the great doors, the singular keys, the whispered talk, echoes of lonely footsteps, the sunset shadow of the tall steeple, reaching further into the town than the good bishop's teaching, and the general complexion of a spot where morning had the stillness of evening, and spring some of the tones of autumn, formed a proper background to a person constituted as Faith, who, like Miss Hepzibah Pyncheon's chicken, possessed in miniature all the antiquity of her progenitors.

After tea Christopher went into the streets, as was frequently his custom, less to see how the world crept on there than to walk up and down for nothing at all. It had been market-day, and remnants of the rural population that had visited the town still lingered at corners, their toes hanging over the edge of the pavement, and their eyes wandering about the street.

The angle which formed the turning-point of Christopher's promenade

was occupied by a jeweller's shop, of a standing which completely outshone every other shop in that or any trade throughout the town. Indeed, it was a staple subject of discussion in Melchester how a shop of such pretensions could find patronage sufficient to support its existence in a place which, though well-populated, was not fashionable. It had not long been established there, and was the enterprise of an incoming man whose whole course of procedure seemed to be dictated by an intention to astonish the native citizens very considerably before he had done. Nearly everything was glass in the frontage of this fairy mart, and its contents glittered like the hamochrysos stone. The panes being of plate-glass, and the shop having two fronts, a diagonal view could be had through it from one to the other of the streets to which it formed a corner.

This evening, as on all evenings, a flood of radiance spread from the window-lamps into the thick autumn air, so that from a distance that corner appeared as the glistening nucleus of all the light in the town. Towards it idlemen and women unconsciously bent their steps, and closed in upon the panes like night-birds upon the lantern of a lighthouse.

When Christopher reached the spot there stood close to the pavement a plain close carriage, apparently waiting for some person who was purchasing inside. Christopher would hardly have noticed this had he not also perceived, pressed against the glass of the shop-window, an unusual number of local noses belonging to overgrown country lads, tosspots, an idiot, the ham-smoker's assistant with his sleeves rolled up, a scot-and-lot freeholder, three or four seamstresses, the young woman who brought home the washing, and so on. The interest of these gazers in some proceedings within, which by reason of the gas-light were as public as if carried on in the open air, was very great.

"Yes, that's what he's a buying o'—haw, haw!" said one of the young men as the shopman removed from the window a gorgeous blue velvet tray of wedding-rings, and laid it on the counter.

"'Tis what you may come to yerself, sooner or later, God have mercy upon ye; and as such no scoffing matter," said an older man. "Faith, I'd as lief cry as laugh to see a man in that corner."

"He's a gent getting up in years too. He must hev been through it a few times afore, seemingly, to sit down and buy the tools so cool as that."

"Well, no. See what the shyest will do at such times. You bain't yerself then; no man living is hisself then."

"True," said the ham-smoker's man. "'Tis a thought to look at that a chap will take all this trouble to get a woman into his house, and a twelvemonth after would as soon hear it thunder as hear her sing!"

The policeman standing near was a humane man, through having a young family he could hardly keep; and he hesitated about telling them to move on. Christopher had before this time perceived that the articles were laid down before an old gentleman who was seated in the shop, and

that the gentleman was none other than he who had been with Ethelberta in the concert-room. The discovery was so startling that, constitutionally indisposed as he was to stand and watch, he became as glued to the spot as the other idlers. Finding himself now for the first time directly confronting the preliminaries of Ethelberta's marriage to a stranger, he was left with far less equanimity than he could have supposed possible to the situation.

"So near the time!" he said, and looked hard at Lord Mountclere.

Christopher had now a far better opportunity than before for observing Ethelberta's betrothed. Apart from any bias of jealousy, disappointment, or mortification, he was led to judge that this was not quite the man to make Ethelberta happy. He had fancied her companion to be a man under fifty; he was now visibly sixty or more. And it was not the sort of sexagenarianism beside which a young woman's happiness can sometimes continue to keep itself alive in a quiet sleepy way. Suddenly it occurred to him that this was the man whom he had helped in the carriage accident on the way to Knollsea. He looked again.

By no means undignified, the face presented that combination of slyness and jocundity which we are accustomed to imagine of the canonical jolly-dogs in mediæval tales. The gamesome Curate of Meudon might have supplied some parts of the countenance; cunning Friar Tuck the remainder. Nothing but the viscount's constant habit of going to church every Sunday morning when at his country residence kept unsaintliness out of his features—for though he lived theologically enough on the Sabbath, as it became a man in his position to do, he was strikingly mundane all the rest of the week, always preferring the devil to God in his oaths. And nothing but antecedent good-humour prevented the short fits of crossness incident to his little infirmities from becoming established. His look was exceptionally jovial now, and the corners of his mouth twitched as the telegraph needles of a hundred little erotic messages from his heart to his brain. Anybody could see that he was a merry man still, who loved good company, warming drinks, nymph-like shapes, and pretty words, in spite of the disagreeable suggestions he received from the pupils of his eyes, and the joints of his lively limbs, that imps of mischief were busy sapping and mining in those regions with the view of tumbling him into a certain cool cellar under the church-aisle.

In general, if a lover can find any ground at all for serenity in the tide of an elderly rival's success, he finds it in the fact itself of that ancientness. The other side seems less a rival than a makeshift. But Christopher no longer felt this, and the significant signs before his eyes of the imminence of Ethelberta's union with this old hero filled him with restless dread. True, the gentleman, as he appeared illuminated by the jeweller's gas-jets, seemed more likely to injure Ethelberta by indulgence than by severity, while her beauty lasted; but there was a nameless something in him less tolerable than this.

The purchaser having completed his dealings with the goldsmith,

was conducted to the door by the master of the shop, and into the carriage, which was at once driven off up the street.

Christopher now much desired to know the name of the man whom a nice chain of circumstantial evidence taught him to regard as the happy winner where scores had lost. He was grieved that Ethelberta's confessed reserve should have extended so far as to limit her to mer indefinite hints of marriage when they were talking almost on the brink of the wedding-day. That the ceremony was to be a private one—which it probably would be because of the disparity of ages—did not in his opinion justify her secrecy. He had shown himself capable of a transmutation as valuable as it is rare in men, the change from pestering lover to staunch friend, and this was all he had got for it. But even an old lover sunk to an indifferentist might have been tempted to spend an unoccupied half-hour in discovering particulars now, and Christopher had not lapsed nearly so far as to absolute unconcern.

That evening, however, nothing came in his way to enlighten him. But the next day, when skirting the Close on his ordinary duties, he saw the same carriage standing at a distance, and paused to behold the same old gentleman come from a well-known office and re-enter the vehicle—Lord Mountclere, in fact, in earnest pursuit of the business of yesternight, having just pocketed a document in which romance, rashness, law, and gospel are so happily made to work together that it may safely be regarded as the neatest compromise which has ever been invented since Adam sinned.

This time Julian perceived that the brougham was one belonging to the Crown Hotel, which Lord Mountclere was using partly from the necessities of these hasty proceedings, and also because, by so doing, he escaped the notice that might have been bestowed upon his own equipage or men-servants, the Mountclere hammer-cloths being known in Melchester. Christopher now walked towards the hotel, leisurely, yet with anxiety. He inquired of a porter what people were staying there that day, and was informed that they had only one person in the house, Lord Mountclere, whom sudden and unexpected business had detained in Melchester since the previous day.

Christopher lingered to hear no more. He retraced the street much more quickly than he had come; and he only said, "Lord Mountclere—it must never be!"

As soon as he entered the house, Faith perceived that he was greatly agitated. He at once told her of his discovery, and she exclaimed, "What a brilliant match!"

"Oh, Faith," said Christopher, "you don't know. You are far from knowing. It is as gloomy as midnight. Good God, can it be possible!"

Faith blinked in alarm, without speaking.

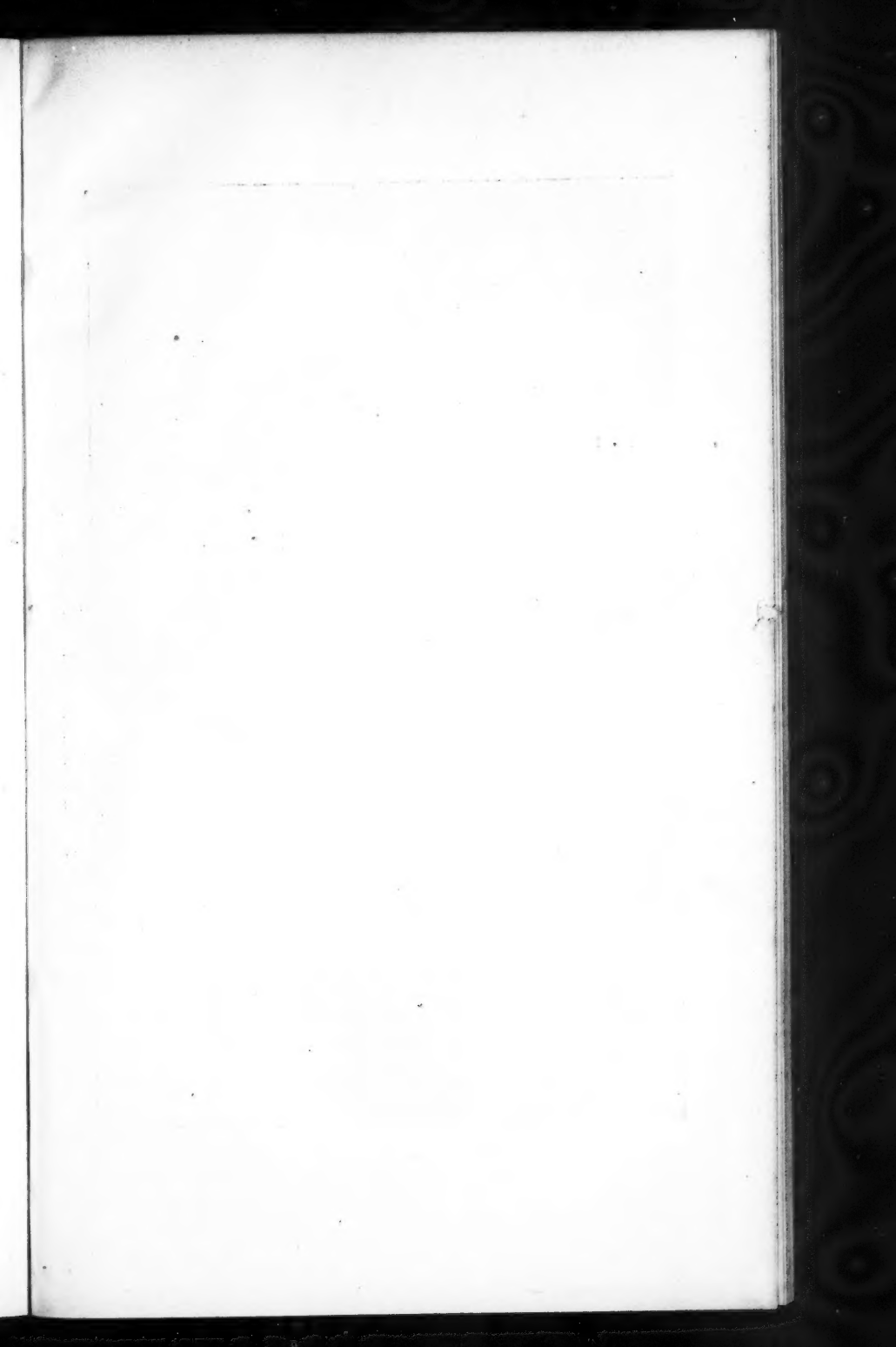
"Did you never hear anything of Lord Mountclere when we lived at Sandbourne?"

"I knew the name—no more."

"No, no—of course you did not. Well, though I never saw his face, to my knowledge, till a short time ago, I know enough to say that if earnest representations can prevent it, this marriage shall not be. Father knew him, or about him, very well; and he once told me—what I cannot tell you. Fancy, I have seen him three times—yesterday, last night, and this morning—besides helping him on the road some weeks ago, and never once considered that he might be Lord Mountclere. He is here almost in disguise, one may say; neither man nor horse is with him; and his object accounts for his privacy. I see how it is—she is doing this to benefit her brothers and sisters, if possible; but she ought to know that if she is miserable they will never be happy. That's the nature of women—they take the form for the essence, and that's what she is doing now. I should think her guardian-angel must have quitted her when she agreed to a marriage which may tear her heart out like a claw."

"You are too warm about it, Kit—it cannot be so bad as that. It is not the thing, but the sensitiveness to a thing, which is the true measure of its pain. Perhaps what seems so bad to you falls lightly upon her mind. A campaigner in a heavy rain is not more uncomfortable than we are in a slight draught; and Ethelberta, in the midst of her sapphires and gold cups and wax-candles, will not mind facts which look like spectres to us outside. A title will turn troubles into romances, and she will shine as an interesting viscountess in spite of them."

The discussion with Faith was not continued, Christopher stopping the argument by saying that he had a good mind to go off at once to Knollsea. But till the next morning Ethelberta was certainly safe; no marriage was possible anywhere before then. He passed the afternoon in a state of great indecision.





ALL BEFORE THEM WAS A SHEET OF WHITENESS.

